

METAPHORS OF THE MONSTROUS MIND: AUTISM,
CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR, AND THE
AUTISTIC-MONSTROUS

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my autistic brothers and sisters: specifically, Sam Chammas, Nathaniel Hagemaster, and Rachel Snow. You may not be my blood, but you are my kin.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In a literature class in which I am an instructional assistant, a young man who has revealed to the lead professor that he has been diagnosed with Asperger's listens intently when I reveal that my research revolves around not only metaphor but also metaphor's effects on people with autism. I mention that one of the metaphors that affect the neurotypical¹ is autistic as monster.

"But usually people aren't that flippant," he protests, and I inform him that he is correct. However, I explain, people are often unaware of their unconscious fears, including those that fuel the metaphors utilized in popular monster narratives that equate non-neurotypical humans with the monstrous.

And then I suddenly see the spark of recognition in his eyes. "I usually get compared to a robot," he observes, quickly aware of the metaphor most commonly used to frame his behavior and the neurology from which it springs.

Thus, in an instant, a fellow non-neurotypical confirms what I have been working on and its importance—the dehumanization of the autistic via the monstrous conceptual metaphor and the resulting treatment (typically mistreatment) of those who differ from mainstream, dominant society.

Monsters are not real, but the fears that inspire the monster are, indeed, very real. As Jeffrey Cohen writes, "the monster's body is a cultural body" (4). Cultures, societies, create monsters from their fears and project those constructions onto the canvas of flesh-

¹ A term used by the autistic (non-neurotypical) to describe non-autistic people

and-blood people, people who differ from the mainstream... people who are often the most vulnerable.

There are, of course, established ways of dealing with monsters. In fact, there are three methods that come to mind: (1) “cure” them—make them enough like the norm or force them to reject themselves and their difference, such as the cures for vampirism we see sought in many supernatural narratives; (2) isolate, institutionalize, and otherwise remove them from society, such as occurs in various “zombie zones” in the zombie genre of films to keep the dead from the living; or (3) kill them. Disturbingly enough, these models are the same ones used to navigate interaction with the disabled, including the autistic.

Electroshock (electroconvulsive) “therapy” reminiscent of the lightning-harvesting device used in the *Frankenstein* film is still used by facilities trusted to care for autistic people, such as the Judge Rotenberg Center where, in 2002, a young man named Andre McCollins (12-years-old) was shocked thirty-one times (Gonnerman, “31 Shocks Later”). McCollins, whose “treatment” appears on hidden camera, can be heard shouting “no” and pleading for help while orderlies and nurses can be heard in the background laughing, not at all unlike the hysterical laughing of the mad Dr.

Frankenstein as he funnels electricity into *his* monster to “cure” death.

Autists often find themselves institutionalized. “Treatment” often can include dubious and cruel forms of therapy such as the electroconvulsive treatments used as punishment for numerous autistic people such as Andre McCollins at the Judge Rotenberg Center; sensory immersion techniques² that are meant to trigger painful

² Sensory immersion therapies may include placing an autistic person with a hyper-sensitivity to loud noises in a locked room with such noise. The effect on the autist is traumatizing.

meltdowns; and a form of indentured servitude whereby the institutions managers utilize the labor of patients to care for less mobile or able patients. A mirror of this institutionalization occurs in the television series *Alphas* in the form of “The Compound.” Alphas that are considered to be a threat to society are sent to Binghamton Special Research Facility, commonly referred to in the television series as “The Compound.” Alphas are inmates at Binghamton with no rights, comparable to many institutions for the disabled. The most feared “treatment” at Binghamton occurs in Building Seven. Spoken of in hushed tones by the non-neurotypical Alphas—the series refers to the Alphas as both non-neurotypicals and neurodiverse throughout the series—who are imprisoned at the facility, the inmates of Building Seven have a microchip placed into their brains to remove free will.

And, finally, the last resort of handling the disabled and the monster is to eliminate the source of fear—this includes cures that kill and killing as a cure. Like most other minorities and disabled individuals, autistic people are statistically far more likely to be the victims of violence and abuse rather than the perpetrators. Unfortunately, many caregivers even seek to end the lives of their autistic charges by taking their lives, such as Issy Stapleton who was nearly killed by her mother, Kelli, via carbon monoxide when Kelli locked Issy and herself in their van and started fires in charcoal grills (Rosin, “By Noon They’d Both Be In Heaven”); Alex Spourdalakis who was stabbed to death in his bed by his mother and godmother who grew tired of caring for the severely disabled boy (Willingham, “If A Parent Murders An Autistic Child, Who Is To Blame?”) ; or London McCabe who drowned when his mother tossed him off of the Yaquina Bay Bridge in

Oregon in November of 2014 (Vinograd and Conner, “Jillian McCabe Accused of Throwing Autistic Son Off Oregon Bridge”).

The monster is seen at best as a pest to be exterminated and a plague to be purged at worst. Like the zombies of the novel and film *Warm Bodies*, the non-neurotypical are often conceptualized in terms of a contagious disease, an epidemic. The zombies of *Warm Bodies*, like many zombies in the horror genre, are the result of an illness. They then become victims and casualties of the virus to the living, who think little of killing those they view as already dead or inhabiting a life not worth living.

It is because of our false conceptualization, our improper smoothing of perceptual data, that we demonize the autistic. To change the outcome, we must change the way we view the autistic-other; we must unsmooth the data and receive media critically. That is the reason and the basis for this thesis.

Chapter Map:

The introduction presents the problem of the conceptual metaphor in relation to interpersonal human communication in specific relation to the conceptualization of the Other. The marginalized are, of course, the easiest and most vulnerable targets of the conceptual monster metaphor—this has been demonstrated before in works regarding the monstrous-feminine, the monster queer, and the racially Other. I add the monstrous autistic to the list of victimized. I am establishing here the problem as one of symbolic oppression, or oppression bolstered by symbols, conceptual metaphors. Furthermore, I am establishing not only the need for intervention, but attempting to forge a path of educational intervention toward a place of learning for true critical thought.

In Chapter Two, I lay the foundation of metaphor and its rhetorical usage. In this chapter, I elucidate the theory of the conceptual metaphor first. I then explore the concerns of theorists such as Frederick Nietzsche (*On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense*) and Susan Sontag (*Illness as Metaphor* and *AIDS and Its Metaphors*) in regards to metaphors and the foundation of popular worldviews, and specifically metaphor to relate concepts of illness, disability, and fear of the Other. I move to a discussion of monster theory to hone in, specifically, on the conceptual metaphor of the monstrous by utilizing (in particular) the theories of Jeffrey Cohen (“Monster Culture”) and Paul Longmore (*Why I Burned My Book and Other Essays on Disability*) and Angela Smith (*Hideous Progeny: Disability, Eugenics, and Classic Horror Cinema.*) This chapter culminates in an analysis of conceptualization of the Other via one’s perception of self and how one actually distinguishes an Other via a sort of modified Turing test. Finally, I close this chapter with my own theories of how the autistic-monstrous is conceptualized.

In Chapter Three, I link the concepts of the monstrous and how they may be deconstructed (de-composed) to reveal the unfounded fears of the Other upon which they are based. I also analyze other deconstructive texts regarding metaphors of the monstrous and their foundations in fears of minority groups. Monster theory, including those theories forwarded by Jeffrey Cohen, Angela Smith, and Harry M. Benshoff (*Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film*), are foundational for the analysis of the monster metaphor as it relates to fear, as well as my own theories of the autistic-monstrous. I then analyze popular cultural texts such as Frankenstein’s monster of *Frankenstein* (the novel and the film), R and Julie of *Warm Bodies* (the novel and the film), Anya of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and Anna Levy of *Alphas* for metaphorical

monstrousness revealing fear of specific autistic behavior and neurology. The process by which I examine these texts will be thorough and as transparent a reading as possible to enable others to do the same.

Chapter Four is an in-depth examination of the possibility offered by recent inclusive dialogues that allow the viewer a perception of the autistic as heroic, or, as I refer to the characterization, the autistic-heroic. The autistic, although still singled out for their monstrous neurology and behaviors in their respective narratives, can also be viewed as heroic due to the very same facets. Thus, I examine Perceval of *Perceval, or the Quest for the Holy Grail*, Data of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, and Gary Bell of *Alphas* for the neurological traits that make them monstrous and heroic in their own story arc within their own respective works of fiction. I surmise that, although the autistic-heroic is not an end to the problematic nature of the autistic-monstrous metaphor (many of the autistic-heroic characters are still seen as requiring a narrative prosthesis to make them more fully human), the autistic-heroic is a possible step toward unsmoothing the autistic-monstrous.

In Chapter Five, I seek methods of intervention in the composition classroom. Through a critical lens, I interrogate theoretical constructs in the classroom whereby power might be decentered, recognition may be given to student knowledge, and processes of writing and teaching may be recognized over the fetishized, finalized product. I explore pedagogical methods by which students may come to consciousness regarding the methods by which society-at-large demonizes (through metaphor) that which it cannot understand. It is my contention that by revealing the way in which society operates to oppress, students may begin to dismantle (rather than reify) oppressive social

structures. By examining the media through which students are being asked to consume, teachers may begin to allow students to “speak about their understanding of the world, to go with them towards the direction of a critical, scientific understanding of their world” (Shor and Freire 106) as is vital to critical pedagogy. The critical consciousness raising is equivalent to the de-composition process theorized by Robert McRuer in his book *Crip Theory* (154).

Chapter Six will conclude this thesis with a reiteration of the problem: a smoothing of the perception of the neurotypical leading to a universalizing of perspective and a false neuronormativizing of humanity. The conceptual metaphor, while indispensable to human thought, can be dangerously misapplied. When the bricks of the social construction, the metaphors atop metaphors, begin to disintegrate, society itself, top-heavy already, may collapse upon those at the bottom of the social ladder. While popular films and literature can entertain, they also influence. They are dangerous because of their perceived innocuousness. However, they are not without meaning. The monster is the repository for all of society’s ills, real or imagined, and the monster is embodied in real living people.

The autistic can be cruel or kind, monstrous or heroic, but mostly the non-neurotypical individual is just like every other person on the planet: sometimes courageous, often frightened, at times friendly, sometimes unwelcoming, but always merely human. Therefore, this thesis must culminate in unsmoothing the folds that allow the connective tissue between the fear and those who are the basis of the societal fear to be hidden. Thus, we must explicate—in the classic sense of the word, like ironing a sheet—those folds. The monster must come to represent an actual fear; if we believe

people monsters, there is no end to the evil that we might justify in purging society of that evil.

CHAPTER II

MONSTROUS METAPHORS: (MIS)UNDERSTANDING THE OTHER

It is reasonable to believe that humankind has been using metaphorical devices beginning not long after the first words were uttered. However, the first person currently known in the literature to have defined metaphor is Aristotle. In Aristotle's definition, metaphor is merely, metaphorically, a bridge between one thing and another, thus a rhetor might locate similarities between an idea and its reality. Despite Aristotle's less neurological insights into the meanings and usage of metaphor, he did preview for rhetors the cognitive linguistic understanding of metaphor as much later explored by Mark Johnson and George Lakoff.

The problem with metaphor, left unexplored by Aristotle and not thoroughly addressed by Johnson and Lakoff, is the propensity for humankind to confuse subject position with object position, or, as Barbara Johnson explains, for humans to become things and things to become human. When the image (physical or metaphysical) of a person or concept is not perceived as similar to the conceiver, the conceptual metaphorical understanding of the Other is as non-humans. As Jeffrey Cohen illustrates through his use of monster theory, it makes no difference where the monster exists (mind or matter) because the concept of the monster exists and is projected onto real bodies.

The real bodies may be singular, but more often than not the monster's body is conceived through metaphors of the monstrous as entire cultures. Thus, uniquely human practices and ways of being are construed to be somehow inhuman. Of course, the fear of the Other is perpetuated by the imprecise nature of what Alan Turing called "The

Imitation Game.” That is, due to the complex understandings (and misunderstandings) of self and Other, humanity is forced to play a game, to run a mental test, upon that which is potentially human. That which may be human is then judged against the image of humanity (often the image of ‘self’) for similarity. If the image of humanity as conceived is too dissimilar from the image or preconception of the person, he or she is a monster.

Simple Metaphor: Its Beginnings, Its Cognitive Nature, and Its Problems

In *The Rhetoric* and *The Poetics*, Aristotle defined metaphor as a rhetorical device and as a linguistic device by which one concept or object is defined in relation to another. Aristotle tells us, “Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, on the grounds of analogy” (*The Poetics*, 1457b1-30). Aristotle furthers his definition of metaphor by writing, “all people carry on their conversations with metaphors and words in their native and prevailing meanings” (*The Rhetoric*, 1404b). Thus, Aristotle is referring to a mere comparison between two easily conceptualized ideas through a common social lexicon, not unlike what linguists Mark Johnson and George Lakoff refer to as literal meanings. This is not to say that literal meanings exclude metaphor, but that the metaphors are commonplace and easily accessible as the objective reality of the situation.

However, Aristotle defines another layer of metaphor later in the same work: “Metaphor especially has clarity and sweetness and strangeness, and its use cannot be learned from anyone else. One should speak both epithets and metaphors that are appropriate, and this will be from analogy” (*The Rhetoric*, 1405a). Therefore, Aristotle recognizes the usefulness of a metaphorical analogy, but he also identifies that metaphor

may be more complex and less accessible to conceptualize that which is less easily defined. Aristotle also distinguishes that metaphor may be applied appropriately or inappropriately. However, what Aristotle fails to inform us of is the tendency for the basis of metaphors, the concrete, to become abstractions made conceptual reality through human intervention, rhetorical intervention that links the more abstract to the least abstract until the foundations of the ideation disintegrate.

In his essay *On Truth and Lie in a Non-Moral Sense*, philosopher Frederich Nietzsche concerns himself with the consequences of the evolution of metaphor from the abstract to the blatantly false. Nietzsche defines the process of metaphor as one of (possibly) uncritical perception to that of complete abstraction far from the essence of that which was originally defined: “A nerve stimulus, first transposed into an image—first metaphor. The image, in turn, imitated by a sound—second metaphor. And each time there is a complete overleaping of one sphere, right into the middle of an entirely new and different one” (*On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense*). Nietzsche is thus concerned with the unstable nature of metaphor.

In particular, in Nietzsche’s perception, metaphor might characterize what was once misperceived as truth as objective reality and perpetuate ideas and attitudes founded on faulty ground. Nietzsche imagines this breakdown of an objective sense of reality, writing that “truth” is actually

a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about

which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins.

Hence, social reality, in Nietzsche's view, may be constructed on metaphorical bricks whose meanings have long since eroded and become "the residue of metaphor." The societal implication, the impact upon the cultural consciousness of an entire civilization, is hence alluded to by Nietzsche.

The process by which metaphor affects human thought—and therefore human interaction—is illuminated by the work of Kenneth Burke who in *A Grammar of Motives* expresses a concern similar to Nietzsche's in regard to metaphor's relation to truth. In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke writes of the powerful connection between metaphor and meaning using the Bible as his text, "The literal meaning of Scripture is not in the figure, but in that which is figured. For instance, with a metaphor like 'God's arm,' the literal sense would be 'God's operative power'" (220). Thus, Burke recognizes the ultimate power of the metaphor in correlating it with God's ultimate power and the power of Scripture to persuade.

Jeffrey Murray argues that Burke has a keen eye on the ethical ramifications of the social construction of reality via literary devices. That is to say, for Burke, it is not only metaphors we live by but fictions we live by. Murray states that tropes for Burke "function not only *epistemologically* in the discovery of truth, but also *ontologically* in the construction of truth" (22). Therefore, Burke believes, as Murray argues, that truth is largely a social construct, and what is taken for "truth" is often the product of rhetorical motives and the product of more nefarious manipulations to create a worldview.

Susan Sontag, Burke's student and a scholar concerned with the formation of worldview, also confronts the dark side of metaphor in her works *Illness as Metaphor* and *AIDS and Its Metaphors*. In the opening passages to *AIDS and Its Metaphors*, Sontag identifies the issue: "Of course, one cannot think without metaphors" (93). Sontag's argument hinges on her assertion that metaphors of illness are ultimately harmful to the ill and infirm. The metaphors she identifies regarding, specifically, cancer, tuberculosis, and AIDS are based on concepts of intrusion, war, and shame. The body, then, as Sontag illustrates, is a prime source for metaphorical understanding. Furthermore, more than just identifying tenor and vehicle of metaphors of illness, Sontag illustrates the insidious nature of metaphor when utilized in attempt to understand that which is far too complex and mysterious to conceptualize given the limited nature of metaphor. We might, Sontag implies, as a culture assign metaphors to our emotions and prejudices and thereby cause harm, however indirect and unintended that harm may be.

The Object and the Other

The "self" has long been a subject of great consternation to philosophers and theorists alike. Psychologists and philosophers of consciousness have attempted to identify what the "self" is and how the self forms in relation to the Other. The differences between persons and things are not so easily defined, so says Barbara Johnson in work by the same name: *Persons and Things*. Johnson makes use of Ovid's tale of Narcissus in *Metamorphoses* to describe the cognitive dissonance between the self and the Other. It is Johnson's assertion that, in falling in love with his reflection, Narcissus realizes that his image is not the self but a thing (47-49). "It's not just that Narcissus recognizes that the Other is the self; he also recognizes that the self is another: 'iste ego sum,' 'je est un

atre.” In other words, Narcissus, in his climactic recognition scene, shouts out ‘the other is *here*’ but ‘I am *there*,’” writes Johnson (49).

When we happen upon our own reflection, we also might claim this to be ourselves, our self. The question Johnson raises is an important one: might the self only be known in relation to the thing, the Other? Furthermore, do others become persons when we recognize the reflections of our self in them—when they are most like us?

As we attempt to make sense of our lives and of others, we employ metaphor. For example, it is in the search for self and the identification of self that one creates the Other, defining “self” via the “non-self.” We must objectify the self for the self to become subject. An individual’s reflection, whether in a pond or in the eye of our compatriots, must exemplify and become reflected in the observer’s mind to become self. The understanding of self, of basic humanity, relies greatly, then, on similarity: I am a person because you are a person, and I recognize your personhood in me. However, if my image is not reflected in you as a person, then I begin to see you as something other than a person.

Of course, there are things that share the forms of persons: puppets, poppets, and dolls. Although inanimate, puppets might be animated by the will of another. What then, if anything, separates the puppet from the person? Johnson locates the issue of the puppet’s personhood not between the self and the Other but between the natural and the unnatural:

Puppets are surrounded by an aura of otherness—never familiar—and that is what makes them proper stand-ins for the invisible. The human or divine soul is supposed to inhabit a total organic form in which the image

does not divide into parts. Instead of the opposition between inanimate and animate, we have the opposition between the organic and the inorganic.

(87)

It is no mistake that Johnson mentions the division of parts, for she estimates the fear of prosthesis is related to the fear of the puppet. In fact, the fear of the human-like puppet or doll made animate has a name: *automatonaphobia*. It can be no mistake that the word *auto* is Latin word meaning “self”—it is also the root word from which the *autism* is derived. I mean here to point out another connection between understanding and language, both conscious and subconscious. The automaton is the reflection of the person, the image. Then might we ask if the automaton be mistakenly given personhood? The creation of the automaton is eerily similar to the Christian creation myth—for the male of the species, at least. For if the automaton has a self, what then keeps the imitation of mankind from personhood when we define personhood as the recognition of self?

Monsters in our Midst

For Steven Schneider, who utilizes the work of Lakoff and Johnson, as well as Freud and Burke, there are four theses to the monster genre of film:

(1) paradigmatic horror narratives work by reconfirming for audiences infantile beliefs that were abandoned long ago, such as the belief in the ability for the dead to return to life; (2) horror film monsters are best understood as metaphorical embodiments of such narratives. As such, they are capable of reconfirming surmounted beliefs by their very presence; (3) these metaphorical embodiments are conceptual, not merely

cinematographic, which is to say that they exist in the mind, not just on the screen; and (4) although the metaphorical nature of the horror film monsters us psychologically necessary, their surface heterogeneity is historically and culturally contingent. (169)

Schneider thus asserts that the monster is the literary and cinematography product of fear. The fear of the unknown and the unknowable, intermingled with infantile beliefs regarding the “order” of the waking world, results in the need to codify as the monster that which resides outside of boundaries and beyond the possibility for human understanding.

Jeffery Cohen theorizes upon the necessities of the monster symbol in his work, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses).” Cohen asserts that “monsters must be examined within the intricate matrix of relations (social, cultural, and literary-historical) which generate them. A mixed category, the monster resists any classification built on hierarchy. ...The monstrous is a genus too large to be encapsulated in any conceptual system” (2-3). By naming the feeling of which Cohen speaks—fear being the most salient definition given the monstrous metaphorical form—society feels as if it might understand its fear; however, the dehumanization of the person as monster may result in inhuman treatment of a de-personified Other.

Cohen’s intricate examination of the monster in cultural terms indicates that the monster possesses seven definitive positions within the cultural construction of meaning: “Thesis I: The Monster’s Body Is a Cultural Body”: Cohen acknowledges that the monster, its habits, weaknesses, and all the mythology surrounding its existence has a cultural significance and is only significant to the culture that creates, embraces, re-

creates, and reifies it. Even though it exists only as a sociocultural construct, the monster has a distinct cultural purpose. Monsters convey cultural ideas through narrative, through language. Cohen writes, “The monstrous body is pure culture. A construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read: the *monstrum* is etymologically ‘that which reveals,’ ‘that which warns,’ a glyph that seeks a hierophant... Like a letter on the page, the monster signifies something other than itself: it is always a displacement” (4). Thus, the monster-symbol is a form of communication, language, rhetoric. Monsters and monstrous narratives serve rhetorical purposes; monsters are cultural rhetoric. The monster symbolizes all of that which a culture is not, or is not supposed to be. However, the monster is always a projection of physical reality—although socially constructed, monsters are projected onto real bodies.

“Thesis II: The Monster Always Escapes”: Despite society’s scorn of the monstrous, the monster-symbol is useful. Society must always remain vigilant toward the monstrous will that threatens to subvert, to pervert, to conquer. Cohen argues, “The anxiety that condenses like green vapor into the form of the vampire can be dispersed temporarily, but the revenant by definition returns. And so the monster’s body is both corporal and incorporeal: its threat is its propensity to shift” (5). Cohen hereby states that the usefulness of the monster, its rhetorical nature, is to serve as a kind of ever-transforming shibboleth; like language, the figure of the monster, the monstrous metaphor, can serve many purposes and signify many of the dominant culture’s perceived ills, corporeal or non-corporeal. Although Johnson does not explicitly state this idea as such, it is directly implied: not only may the thing become a person, but the person may become a thing. For example, Cohen points to the longstanding connection between the

blood of the vampire myth and how the vampire's body transformed into the homosexual's body, especially during the age of AIDS awareness. This association is also noted by Harry Benshoff and Angela Smith. The monster is not only read, but can be re-read.

“Thesis III: The Monster Is the Harbinger of Category Crisis”: The monster, theorizes Cohen, always refuses easy categorization. While the human mind attempts to understand and thus placate all within its purview, the monster is the symbol for the hubris of control by categorization, cognition. The monster cannot be reasoned with, yet in monster narratives reason often vanquishes the monster. Therefore, the monster is to be feared for its resistance to reason. “And so the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions... Classical ‘wonder books’ radically undermine the Aristotelian taxonomic system, for by refusing an easy compartmentalization of their monstrous contents, they demand a radical” (Cohen 6). The monstrous, then, is powerful; it is both a powerful weapon of oppression and a threat to the domination of conscious, binary structures, including complex systems of oppression like the matrices of oppression.

A sort of monstrous knowledge may be born from a postmodern (or dismodern) examination of the monster's body; as Cohen utilizes the words and ideas of Derrida and Barbra Johnson, “the monster is in this way the living embodiment of the phenomenon Derrida has famously labeled the ‘supplement’ (*ce dangereux supplément*): it breaks apart bifurcating, ‘either/or’ syllogistic logic with a kind of reasoning closer to ‘and/or,’ introducing what Barbara Johnson has called ‘a revolution in the very logic of meaning’”(7). We may then make the case that the monster, like language itself, uses the

monster-symbol in the classroom (of the university and of life) to engage with this new logic of meaning, to break oppressive structures, and to form new meanings... to teach what Robert McRuer refers to as “de-composition.”

“Thesis IV: The Monster Dwells at the Gates of Difference”: Cohen argues that the monstrous is located always within the Other, but it is also always originating from within. “The monster is difference made flesh, come to dwell among us. In its function as dialectical Other or third-term supplement, the monster is an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond—of all those loci that are rhetorically placed as distant and distinct but originate within. Any kind of alterity can be inscribed across (constructed through) the monstrous body” (7). In other words, the rhetorical purpose of the monster is to form a narrative of belonging by defining what does not belong, a way of ordering the unknown and unknowable into the unwanted and unacceptable.

“Thesis V: The Monster Polices the Borders of the Possible”: Maps exist, if only within cultural imagination, that declare “here be monsters.” The land of the monsters, Cohen asserts, is always located at the edge of the borders of the culture itself. The monster-symbol signifies the boundaries of worlds best left unexplored—at least, that is what the dominant narrative would have its subjects believe. Cohen states, “The monster prevents mobility (intellectual, geographic, or sexual), delimiting the social spaces through which private bodies may move... To step outside this official geography is to risk attack by some monstrous border patrol or (worse) to become monstrous oneself” (12). The monster warns against entrance into liminal spaces.

Again, we see Cohen elucidating that a person may become a thing; a person might forsake one’s personhood should he or she delve into the forbidden land. If one

were to step outside of the metaphorical body of culture, he or she might be killed by the monstrous body or accepted within it. Of course, no one returns from the lands of the monsters. Here, again, we see the power of the monster, as well as its threat. The order demanded by the cultural body may be arbitrary, unnecessarily restrictive, or tyrannical; thus the monstrous body may offer freedom. Repulsion from the public body may give rise to the opportunity for the private body to form what Michael Warner calls a “counterpublic,” or a public composed of the private made public to explore the expanse of the possible.

“Thesis VI: Fear of the Monster Is Really a Kind of Desire”: The monster would not exist were it not for its purpose and multiple purposes: “to normalize and enforce” (Cohen 16), but also to question authority and move beyond a mostly binary understanding of the world and even humanity itself. Whether an observer perceives the monster as a threat, an ally, or a potentiality, all observers recognize the potential of the monster to satiate desires, mostly unspoken. Proponents of normality, normative culture, realize a fulfillment of the desire to control, contain, or conquer the disparate, unfamiliar elements of society that threaten the ordered, structured world of the dominant masses. Meanwhile, those labeled deviant might take refuge in the power of the monster to be frightening; instead of being a cowering mass, shivering under the boot of an oppressive majority, the monster and what it signifies can serve as an alluring figure of menace to an unfriendly public. Freedom of expression from oppressive social conventions, mores, and norms can be intoxicating: “Times of carnival temporarily marginalize the monstrous, but at the same time allow it a safe realm of expression and play: on Halloween everyone is a demon for a night” (Cohen 17). Whether an outlet for socially sanctioned monstrosity-

play, or an exploration of the power of fear of a change in the power dynamic, the monster can seduce as well as terrorize.

“Thesis VII: The Monster Stands at the Threshold ... of Becoming”: The monster metaphor and its countless narratives are, theorizes Cohen, an important discourse. The monster represents knowledge that “arises from the Outside” (Cohen 20). The monster metaphor is the paragon of outsider knowledge: “These monsters ask us how we perceive the world, and how we have misrepresented what we have attempted to place. They ask us to reevaluate our cultural assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, our perception of difference, our tolerance toward its expression. They ask us why we have created them” (Cohen 20). Thus, the metaphor of the monster comprises a kind of discourse, a very important discourse. To know ourselves, we must know what we are not and why we are not. Monsters are always, also, human beings... perhaps not so monstrous after all.

Interestingly, roboticist Mashahiro Mori has built automatons and androids for decades and has noticed that people observing his creations were, at first, fascinated but became steadily more repulsed the more human-like he made the robot. In a paper written over forty years ago in the Japanese journal *Energy*, Mori located the nadir of the repulsion of the observer in an area he dubbed the “uncanny valley.” Mori drew upon Ernst Jentsch’s *On the Psychology of the Uncanny* and Sigmund Freud’s *The Uncanny* in order to describe the feeling of revulsion and attraction that occurs in the human psyche when faced with a human-like automaton. Freud, in turn, had theorized upon the source of the mixture of attraction and repulsion of the robotic doll Olympia in the E.T.A. Hoffman story, “The Sandman.” As Jeffrey Jarome Cohen explains, “the monster is continually linked to forbidden practices, in order to normalize and enforce. The monster

also attracts. The same creatures who terrify and interdict can evoke potent escapist fantasies; the linking of monstrosity with the forbidden makes the monster all the more appealing as a temporary egress from constraint” (17). If we are to accept Cohen’s assertion, we might understand the monstrousness of the automaton as a fully self-recognized being; its allure is freedom from the constraint of the constant search for self among other.

The Thing with a Thousand Heads: Embodying the Monster

In his book *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film*, Harry Benshoff relates the fear that results in monstrousness to the fear of the homosexual. However, Benshoff insists that the primitive fear of the monster has shifted within time and space, just as Cohen has suggested, to understand the mystical, magical monster through science. Benshoff claims this new attempt to understand—in his examination, the monster-queer—occurred in cinematographic history in the World War II era. According to Benshoff, this period is an epoch of scientific optimism with hope: hope for curing the monster. He writes,

While the film retains its classical status by linking homosexual desire to the usual Hollywood horror film signifiers of depravity (bestiality, necrophilia, sado-masochism, incest, racial Otherness, modernism, and the construction of the queer couple), it also looks ahead to a new set of signifiers which would become the chief foci of the monster movie’s narrative during war years—an increasing domestication of the monstrous figures, the idea of monstrous communities, less interest in the so-called

“normal” couple, and a more vigorous interest in psychiatry or medical science as a tool for treating and/or eventually “curing” the monster. (77)

Benshoff hints at one of these “cures” with the title of his second chapter: “Shock Treatment: Curing the Monster Queer during World War II.” Just as Dr. Frankenstein sought to vanquish the specter of Death, electroconvulsive therapy has been (and still is) used to “cure” homosexuals, the mentally disabled, and the non-neurotypical.

Thus, it is the Other, whether otherness is ascribed via sexuality, gender, or disability, that is ripe for application of the monstrous metaphor. And treatment is often little more than code for control. Historian Paul Longmore reiterates the anxieties regarding greater society’s inability to control bodies and behaviors originating from non-normate bodies and minds:

Disability happens around us more often than we generally recognize [invisible disability?] or care to notice, and we harbor unspoken anxieties about the possibility of disablement, to us or someone close to us. What we fear, we often stigmatize and shun and sometimes seek to destroy. Popular entertainments depicting disabled characters allude to these fears and prejudices, or address them obliquely or fragmentarily, seeking to reassure us about ourselves. (132)

Longmore reiterates Michael Wood’s statement that “all movies mirror reality in some way or another” (qtd in Longmore 131). That is to say that the image of the disabled monster is one founded in real fear and animosity.

Control, or lack thereof, is for Longmore often the impetus for disability appearing in the horror film: “As with popular portrayals of other minorities, the

unacknowledged hostile fantasies of the stigmatizers are transferred to the stigmatized. The nondisabled audience is allowed to disown its fears and biases by ‘blaming the victims,’ making them responsible for their own ostracism and destruction” (134). The change in what society fears, in the shape of the monstrous conceptual metaphor, reflects changes in society.

Judith Halberstam gives voice to this occurrence in the change in audience when she writes in *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*, “The body that scares and appalls changes over time, as do the individual characteristics that add up to monstrosity, as do the preferred interpretations of monstrosity” (8). Despite the basic truth of Halberstam’s assertions, the criteria for monstrosity remains largely the same; one need only exist outside a normative view of society to become a metaphorical monster—this is true whether one is homosexual, racially or ethnically Other, or disabled. The reaction is thus a result of marginalization versus a centrality of perception.

Sonnets for Cyborgs: The Machine Monster and the Horror of Imitation

In a landmark paper entitled “Computing Machinery and Intelligence,” Alan Turing theorizes the development of thinking machines. In current terminology, Turing envisions the creation of artificial intelligence. With superior skills as a logician, Turing rebuts all possible arguments opposing the possibility of intelligent machines. I believe he locates many of the prejudices plaguing the autistic-monstrous and central issues to the categorization of the monstrous in general.

Primarily, the fear of the machine is the potential inability of the human judge to distinguish between human and inhuman. The importance of this contest, as Turing dubs it, “the imitation game,” is inexplicably paramount to the collective ego of humanity. (In

Persons and Things, Barbra Johnson likewise notes similar tales of persons and possible distinguishing (and indistinction) from things. Turing states plainly what I believe are the bases of the bias: “We like to believe that Man is in some subtle way superior to the rest of creation. It is best if he can be shown to be necessarily superior, for then there is no danger of him losing his commanding position” (441-42). Of course, the superiority that Turing speaks of is often limited to the less encompassing mankind than to Mankind; that is to say that, as Turing states indirectly himself, humankind is often exclusionary. For example, Turing cites the theological arguments opposing the possibility of intelligent machines with the question as to how “Christians regard the Moslem [*sic*] view that women have no souls” (440). Thus the term ‘Mankind’ is used by Turing, somewhat derisively, to illustrate that man often refuses to see humanity even in its own kind.

Soullessness is, then, regarded by Turing as an objection to artificial intelligence. Interestingly, it seems that soullessness, or some perception of the lack of a soul, could be included in the telling list of objections to Turing’s assertions in regard to AI development entitled “Arguments from Various Disabilities” (444). Turing imagines the resistance to AI creation, stating that a computer machine is, for all intents and purposes, disabled. He imagines the gist of these arguments as stating that machines are supposed to be disabled and thus unable to possess a number of qualities identified (erroneously, in Turing’s view) exclusively with humanity: “Be kind, resourceful, beautiful, friendly, have initiative, have a sense of humour, tell right from wrong, make mistakes, fall in love, enjoy strawberries and cream, make someone fall in love with it, learn from experience, use words properly, be the subject of its own thought, have as much diversity of behaviour as a man, do something really new” (Turing 444).

CHAPTER III

THE AUTISTIC-MONSTROUS: THE NEUROLOGICAL “THEM”

In Chapter Two, I laid the groundwork for understanding conceptual metaphor, including metaphors of the monstrous. Additionally, I considered monster theory as a means for examination of relations between the normate conceptions of body and neurological configuration and disability, including autism. Moreover, in the second chapter, I examined the othering processes as connected to formations and conceptions of selfhood, specifically in the formation of the machine monster and its linkage to the autistic-monstrous.

In this chapter, I will examine the autistic monstrous in films, television shows, and literature. The deconstruction or unsmoothing—a process that I examine in greater depth in Chapter Five—of these textual examples of neurological difference reveal how metaphors of the autistic-monstrous are formed, employed, and obscured in popular culture. This discussion leads to an examination of the connection between the monster and the hero, a connection that I analyze in greater detail in Chapter Four.

Feeble Minds, “Abnormal” Brains, and Unnatural Creation in *Frankenstein*

While “feble-mindedness” is not a symptom of autism, it was long thought to be. In the absence of psychometric evaluative tools to determine the intelligence quotients (I.Q.s) of cases studies who are non-verbal and have difficulty moving (apraxic or dyspraxic individuals), many low-functioning autistics are erroneously labeled cognitively disabled. Furthermore, even high-functioning autistics could have been considered feble-minded, as most definitions included those who had trouble navigating complex social organizations. “In the early twentieth century, the term *feble-mindedness*

had displaced earlier labels for mental ‘inferiority’—such as ‘idiot’ or ‘imbecile’—and would, after the heyday of eugenics, transmute into terms such as ‘mentally retarded’ and more recent designations such as ‘developmentally delayed’ or ‘intellectually disabled,’” writes Angela Smith (64). Of course, historically speaking, feeble-mindedness has also been linked to social class, race, and gender.

Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus contemplates the horrors of science and progress conceptualized against an idealized, romanticized nature. However, the terror inspired by Frankenstein’s monster is a metaphor for the real fear of the monstrous Other. While Mary Shelley’s portrayal is one of a fear of “unnatural” procreation, of men creating life and playing God. However, in stark contrast to Shelley’s astute and considerate creature, in the 1931 film version, Carl Laemmle (producer) and James Whale (director) depict Frankenstein’s creation as largely unintelligent and bumbling, the product of an unnatural, un-heterosexual union of two disabled people through unnatural means. Specifically, the monster is the result of the covert and deceitful actions of a disabled servant, the hunchback Fritz, who steals an “abnormal” brain for Dr. Frankenstein’s monster: “Fritz steals the ‘normal’ brain that Waldman was discussing, but when the jar slips and breaks, Fritz grabs the brain labeled ‘abnormal’ and flees” (Smith 60).

The creature’s monstrous origins substantiate the film’s depiction of the creature as monstrous, and in particular as a low-functioning autistic unable to connect to those around it. For example, in a telling scene reminiscent of an autistic’s misreading of social situations, the monster encounters a little girl tossing flowers into a pond. The monster joins the girl in her activities; however, when the two have no more flowers left, the

monster tosses the girl (Little Maria) into the pond to drown as he believes she will float just as the flowers do. The monster appears to be grief-ridden and guilty over the death of the girl, thereby breaking with the premise that the monster's brain is that of a criminal. However, the depiction of this scene in a censored version has the monster leading the girl off to an unknown destination with the connotation of a nefarious act, which would be in line with the monster's supposed "abnormal" and criminal nature. Moreover, with the film's successful re-release in 1938, "this aspect of the film [the monster's interaction with Little Maria] was ballyhooed in a theatrical trailer that showed the monster and Little Maria walking hand-in-hand while the narration described 'a monster turned loose ...to prey upon the innocence of children'" (Benshoff 142).

This demonization of the non-neurotypical Frankenstein's monster, while seemingly without connection to autism, is reminiscent of an article penned by Eustacia Cutler, mother of autistic author Temple Grandin, entitled "Autism and Child Pornography: A Toxic Combination," in which Cutler (seemingly without evidentiary support) claims validity in rumors of a "disturbing trend" of adult male autistics viewing child pornography. Cutler writes that these men "don't want adults to show them how sex is done; they want children to show them." Cutler thus furthers the monstrous stereotype that links non-neurotypical neurology with criminality and deviant sexuality, claiming that "you can have a first-rate mind, but if the neurology is skewed, the thinking will also be skewed. Particularly social thinking. We're social creatures incomplete without each other." Similarly, as Smith writes, Henry Goddard, American psychologist and eugenicist, believed that "criminality was both heritable and a matter of mental inferiority... [and] believed that the mental growth of 'moral imbeciles' halted just as

their primitive instincts were developing, dooming them to pursue forever primordial impulses toward deceit, theft, and sexual perversion” (64). Unfortunately, the notion of a linkage between sexual criminality and disability is as old as the eugenic movement itself.

Of course, the body of an adult paired with the mind of child has always been a source of horror, and the Frankenstein legend is no different. In Shelley’s novel, Victor Frankenstein’s monster began life as a superhuman entity of enormous stature, but with a child’s mind. As Frankenstein reels with horror at his newly breathing creation, the monster tugs at the bed curtain, lolling its lazy tongue attempting to communicate with its creator. As Frankenstein explains, “His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped and rushed downstairs” (Shelley 26-27). The monster merely attempts at conversing with its creator and is reproached.

The monster, perhaps sensing it is unwelcome, soon leaves Victor’s company, and Victor is glad to be rid of it (Shelley 12-14). However, perhaps as an allusion to the Biblical story of Cain’s monstrous act toward his brother Abel, the monster murders Victor’s young brother while a village girl is executed after being falsely accused of strangling the boy (39-45; 78). The monster later reveals to Frankenstein that it had not wished to murder the boy, young William, but was overwhelmed with jealousy that the haughty young lad was so loved by his family and the monster was doomed to an unmoored life within the sea of humanity that would never love or accept it (78). Like the classic literary trope of the madwoman in the attic and its television equivalent of the

monster in the basement, Frankenstein's monster desires acceptance from its creator; it hopes for familial connection, for inclusion in society.

The monster's true desires are made obvious when it escapes to a small cottage in the country and spies the De Lacey clan, a small family in a neighboring hut (Shelley 57). By observing the De Lacey family, the creature learns to speak. It also discovers how each human within the microcosm of society that is the family is interconnected. Frankenstein's monster yearns to connect with these "beautiful" people (61). The creature even feels empathy for the family, empathy that he cannot express to them directly: "The gentle manners and beauty of the cottagers greatly endeared them to me; when they were unhappy, I felt depressed; when they rejoiced, I sympathized in their joys" (59-60). He aids them in their daily tasks and even attempts to introduce himself to the blind patriarch of the clan, ending in a disastrous fiasco in which the De Lacey children return to chase the monster away.

Truly, it is the spurning by the De Laceys and the attack on the monster as he attempts to rescue a girl from falling into a river that prompts the creature to revile mankind, just as he is reviled. The monster entreats Frankenstein to understand: "Believe me, Frankenstein, I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity; but am I not alone, miserably alone? ...what can I gather from your fellow creatures, who owe me nothing? They spurn and hate me" (Shelley 52). Frankenstein only gave the creature life; it was society in its dispassion that created the monster. The parallel to the popular depiction of autistics is obvious—difference reads as monstrous.

The monster's feeble-mindedness is paradoxical. In Shelley's novel, the monster becomes an intelligent, articulate being. However, his unnatural body makes him

unsightly. The 1931 film, in contrast, envisions the monster much like a low-functioning autistic. The monster is seen as a burden to society, despite the fact that Frankenstein's creation seems more than capable of empathy and productivity, even productivity in a normative sense. Sontag here may help us make sense of the dissonance between the choices of the novel as opposed to the film: while Shelley's is a depiction of man's hubris in creation of life without God, Whale's is a depiction of natural life as unnatural—not unlike how very natural illnesses have been referred to as unnatural as code for unsightly, unusual, or unnecessary.

Dyspraxia, Epidemic Rhetoric, and the Zombies of *Warm Bodies*

In 2011, Isaac Marion published *Warm Bodies*, riding the wave of popularity for zombie fiction. In 2013, the book was made into a film, directed by Jonathan Levine. In this section, I will discuss how contemporary depictions/vilifications of zombies parallels the depictions/vilifications of autistics.

For example, *Dyspraxia* is the common term for a learning disability that impairs a human being's praxis: motor planning and control abilities. Dyspraxia can affect coordinated motor movements, fine motor skills, and even speech in a dyspraxic individual. Some dyspraxics have reported difficulty saying what it is they mean to say, despite possibly possessing a great degree of mental acuity. Dyspraxia is commonly found among those on the autistic spectrum, and it may explain a good deal of the awkwardness that autistic people express when attempting to interact with each other and neurotypicals. One has only to think of Michael Jackson's *Thriller* video to envision the standard zombie movements—walking and gesturing in a halting, disjointed fashion—that is likewise present in *Warm Bodies*, both the novel and the film. As Julie, the female

interest of the zombie protagonist R in the film adaptation of Marion's *Warm Bodies*, says of her would-be paramour, "It must be awful being trapped in there [referring to his body]. You try so hard and nobody sees. You try harder to be better than anyone I know; you certainly try harder than anyone in my city" (Levine, *Warm Bodies*).

R's attempt to connect, to construct meaning with those around him, mirrors both the efforts of Frankenstein's monster with the De Lacey family—along with the monster's clumsiness in the film—and that of the autistic community in that autistic people often struggle to communicate and connect through various communicative differences. Therefore, R's difficulty in moving and speaking may be understood through the lens of autistic dyspraxia.

R's autism is further exhibited in his relationship with his best friend, the zombie M. In Marion's novel, the pair share jokes, make suppositions about the professions of other zombies, and even debate their own existence, all with gestures and wordless sounds—a sign of cultural communication, the complexities of which only a fellow zombie (or autistic) may understand (3-5). Grunting and sighing, M and R "almost have conversations" (Levine, *Warm Bodies*). The two barely communicative friends seek attachment to each other and their fellow zombies in their exile at the airport outside the city, an exile not unlike the institutionalization of autistic people away from the rest of humanity.

With the catalyst of the budding love affair between Julie and R, some of the zombies begin to change. The compassion exhibited between the two sparks life in R and the less decayed zombies. For one to show empathy, one must be taught empathy, and such is the case of the changing, reviving, "exhumed" zombies of *Warm Bodies* (Levine,

Warm Bodies; Marion 238-239). Both Julie and R begin to change along with R's zombie friends. "They're not like me, R," warns Julie when R comes to the Living city to alert her that the "boneys" elders, agents of a dominant neuronormativity, are hunting the lovers to halt the awakening that the two have begun in the others. When the boneys find R and Julie attempting to enlist the humans to help fight the boneys and convince them of the changing nature of the "corpses," M finds R to deliver a warning: "Boneys... going crazy. Coming in... from everywhere. Killing all who... differ" (209). Thus, as in the social imagination of many cultures, these differences are imagined as invasions, invasions of the body of society, similar to Cutler's fear-mongering depictions of autistic males as pedophiles. And as an invasion of the body of society, the fear of the epidemic is cleverly played against even the zombie society.

The disease and epidemic rhetoric are clearly interlaced with the monstrous metaphor of the zombie. According to Susan Sontag, "there is increasing tendency [since the nineteenth century] to call any situation one disapproves of a disease. Disease, which could be considered as much a part of nature as is health, became the synonym of whatever was 'unnatural'" (74). This interweaving of meaning between what is unhealthy and what is unnatural has only deepened in the past century; hence, the zombie contagion narrative wherein a strange, new (usually manmade, adding to the supposition of the unnatural) virus turns once living humans into "unnatural" creatures, zombies. Epidemic, itself, has been used as a metaphor to describe other trends that classes in society deem undesirable, like the autism diagnosis "epidemic."

The changes in R and Julie, changes that spread to R's zombie friends, cause both to be outcast from their respective societies. Julie's human city is unable to comprehend a

“corpse” that can speak and think and that does not attempt to kill and eat them. R’s zombie counterparts are similarly perplexed as to why R will not eat, and will not allow the others to kill and eat, Julie. The changes in both Julie and R inspire fear and abhorrence from both sides.

The “cure” rhetoric found in Marion’s novel is mitigated in the film. The term “cure” is seldom uttered in the movie; instead, “change” and variations thereof are typically used when referring to the reawakening of R and his zombie companions. The film also depicts the newly living zombies as retaining some of their former characteristics: they appear soft-spoken, inarticulate, and clumsy. In a closing scene, M, whose full name we learn is Marcus, attributes his inability to open an umbrella in the rain to “zombie fingers.” In both the film and the novel from whence it was adapted, R refuses to recall his former, living name; instead, R requests Julie continue referring to him as R, as he explains to Julie that he doesn’t want his old life back (Marion 238). R says of his inclusive life among the living and the now-living zombies, “But I am a new thing. A fresh canvas. I can choose what history I build my future on, and I choose a new one” (Marion 238). The model of including the new citizens of the city of the film amongst the living is, therefore, inclusive—allowing the living and the newly living, former zombies to retain their zombie qualities and adapt fully into a new, transformed society—as opposed to the integration of the novel in which the awakening dead are sequestered into a stadium on the outskirts of town (Levine, *Warm Bodies*; Marion 234).

While I do not believe that Marion nor the filmmakers who adapted Marion’s story were cognizant of the characters’ connection to the autistic, it does appear obvious that, in an attempt to humanize that monster, Marion and filmmakers have made it

possible to view the zombies through the lens of the autistic-monstrous. The zombie has long been an encode view of many monstrous bodies—the slave, the capitalist consumer dupe, the immigrant—and the autist and otherwise disabled can be added to this list. *Warm Bodies* serves as a particularly salient example of the autist-monstrous, as R of the novel and film is depicted as caring, loving, and interested in others despite his disabilities—his dyspraxia, his lack of speech, and his difficulty connecting (socializing) with others whether a part of his zombie community or with the living community. Warm Bodies, a metaphor often used to describe people whose usefulness is expended with merely occupying space, does make allusion—whether fully recognized or not—to the societal perception of the autist as mostly useless.

Alexithymia, Indoctrination, and Anya of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

The television show, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, ran from 1997 to 2003. A supernatural drama, *Buffy* combined popular elements of televised teen dramas and fantasy, superhero narratives. Many characters in the series have supernatural origins, but one such character is the ex-demon Anya Jenkins (Emma Caulfield). In this section I draw a parallel between the character of Anya and *alexithymia*, an inability to identify and describe emotions and to engage in interpersonal relationships.

Anya is interesting on a multitude of levels when viewed through the autistic lens: first, autism spectrum disorder in high-functioning individuals is often characterized by pedantic speech and odd prosody in tone or rhythm; second, Anya's inability to grasp the irony of her own statement is indicative of an autistic misunderstanding of that which is not concrete (Griswold, et al); finally, although Anya is unaware of the similarities

between herself and the android, the obvious linking between the autistically-characterized Anya and the robotic April further the case for Anya's autism.

The character Anya is a late edition to the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* cast. First appearing in the third season episode, "The Wish," she performs as a "vengeance demon" who punishes men who wrong women. Anya, whose full demonic name is later revealed to be Anyanka, loses her powers and reverts to human form at the conclusion of "The Wish." Stuck on the mortal plane, without her powers and stripped of her immortality, Anya is forced to live as a teenage girl going to school with Buffy and her friends.

Anya returns to join the cast for season four of the series as a powerless mortal. Buffy's friends and associates, affectionately referred to by fans as the "Scooby Gang" in reference to the cartoon *Scooby Doo*, are reluctant to trust the former demon who appears insensitive due to her tactless comments. Indeed, Anya, like many autistic people, has little idea of what is considered appropriate and becomes known for her bluntness and frank commentary. For instance, in a complex scene within the episode "I Was Made to Love You," Anya says of the android made by criminal genius Warren, April, "She speaks with a strange evenness and selects her words a shade too precisely" ("I Was Made For You"). The scene in which she describes the humanoid robot's pedantic speech and oddly "even" tone serve as comic relief because, ironically, Anya does not realize that her statement is also an accurate account of her own way of speaking.

While one might explain away Anya's differences through her backstory as a 1,000-year-old demon now struggling with her humanity, in an episode entitled "Selfless," Anya's true origins (and her intrinsic social awkwardness) are revealed in Anya's original human form as Aud. Aud, perhaps a play on the word 'odd,' is a 9th-

century maiden from Sjornjost, Sweden. Anya as Aud complains to her unfaithful lover, Olaf, about her fellow villagers and their dislike for her oddities: “I don't talk to people much. I mean, I talk to them, but they don't talk to me. Except to say, ‘Your questions are irksome,’ and ‘Perhaps you should take your furs and your literal interpretations to the other side of the river’” (“Selfless”). Anya expresses here a desire to connect—a common thematic in all of the character analyses so far. Furthermore, her so-called “literal interpretations” are another indication of Asperger’s Syndrome (Griswold, et al).

The betrayal by her lover, Olaf, and her inability to sense it coming, causes Anya’s affections to turn to spite. In response, her heart hardens to the rest of humanity, and she curses Olaf by turning him into a troll; trolls, as she is well aware, are quickly exiled from the village. Impressed by her ruthlessness, vengeance demon patron D’Hoffryn offers to welcome her into the fold of the vengeance demons and bestow upon her immortality and power with which to plague humanity by granting (haphazardly made) wishes with unforeseen consequences to fellow scorned women. This depiction of Anya as embracing a new life as a demon monster may stem from an ideology referred to as *neurosexism*, the belief that behaviors constructed to be male or female have a biologically determined cause in a person’s neurology. One neurosexist notion includes Simon-Baron Cohen’s “extreme male brain” theory of autism whereby Cohen theorizes that autism is caused by an extreme masculinization of the brain. Not only would this theory, if accepted, ignore more feminine people on the spectrum, but it would also explain the impression that women on the spectrum might act more like men, be more empowered (as Anya appears to be), and the induction that autistic women may be more likely to be lesbians.

Although Anya's naiveté is most often utilized to elicit laughter (i.e., "the dumb blonde," in the fifth season episode, "The Body"), Anya's inability to cope with the immensity of death upon the passing away of Buffy's mother is utilized for dramatic effect. Anya's dialog with Willow hints at alexithymia, a condition that is symptomatic of Asperger's Syndrome:

ANYA. Are they gonna cut the body open?

WILLOW. Oh my God! Would you just... stop talking? Just... shut your mouth! Please!

ANYA. What am I doing?

WILLOW. How can you act like that?

ANYA. Am I supposed to be changing my clothes a lot? Is that the helpful thing to do?

XANDER. Guys...

WILLOW. The way you behave...

ANYA. Nobody will tell me.

WILLOW. Because it's not okay for you to be asking these things!

ANYA. But I don't understand! I don't understand how this all happens.

How we go through this. I mean, I knew her, and then she's, there's just a body, and I don't understand why she just can't get back in it and not be dead anymore! It's stupid! It's mortal and stupid! And, and Xander's crying and not talking, and, and I was having fruit punch, and I thought, well Joyce will never have any more fruit punch, ever, and she'll never have

eggs, or yawn or brush her hair, not ever, and no one will explain to me why. (“The Body”)

The above scene illustrates Anya’s “monstrous” alexithymia in that she is unable to comprehend Willow or Xander’s emotions upon the passing of their friend’s mother. Her frustration is evident in her inappropriate questions about changing clothes and whether or not the body will be “cut open.” The final portion of the scene in which Anya mentally works through the actions that Joyce, Buffy’s deceased mother, will no longer be able to perform alludes to Anya’s inability to respond with emotional empathy and her attempt, instead, to connect to the experiences of others through cognitive empathy; therefore, she is demonstrating both a lack of “theory of mind” and trying to adapt through her own experiences, or cognitive empathy.

Another academic analysis of Anya was performed in 2010 by rhetorician Tammy Burnett who describes the character of Anya as a “feminist model of positive sexuality” within the “Whedonverse” (n.p.). Burnett classifies Anya as an enlightened woman due, in part, to her frank discussion of sexuality; for instance, Anya refers to a female love interest of the group’s elder, Giles, as his “orgasm friend.” While Burnett’s feminist critique may be accurate, she ignores the fact that Anya is blunt and frank in all interactions, those regarding sex and sexuality notwithstanding. The Aspergian understanding of Anya’s character and her idiosyncrasies appears to be a more plausible explanation for her difference. All of that aside, it is interesting to ponder the possibility that the AS female may be the model for female empowerment; although advocates of the extreme male brain theory use this feminist empowerment as evidence of autistic female indoctrination.

Although Anya's had been characterized throughout the series as self-serving and even selfish. The final episode of the series ends with Anya's death. Anya dies defending a weak and inexperienced in battle Andrew from hordes of demon vampires. Andrew, like Anya, was once a villain that terrorized the Scoobies that Anya had joined. Anya's previous characterization as a somewhat vain, emotionally detached woman runs counter to the narrative of her death, building with an episode close to the last where we learn of Anya's full backstory, "Selfless." Thus Mitchell and Snyder might identify this story arc as narrative prosthesis, or an attempt to accomplish an ability otherwise unacceptable to the character through a narrative or story.

Invisibility, Genetic "Accidents," and Anna Levy of *Alphas*

Alphas is a television program that ran from 2011-2012 on the SyFy Network. *Alphas* revolves around a narrative of otherwise ordinary humans who develop amazing abilities because of neurological difference. *Alphas* is an extended metaphor for natural neurodiversity—the premise of the show being that certain people have begun developing atypical neurology enabling astounding new abilities tied to their non-typical neurology. The terms "neurodiversity," "neurotypical," and "neurodiverse" are used frequently throughout the run of the program. *Alphas* often tackled issues of invisible disability, genetic abortion and diversity, and the conflict between the neurotypical and the non-neurotypical.

Anna Levy, a young autistic woman, is first introduced in an episode of *Alphas* entitled "Rosetta." Anna and her fellow autistic, Gary, who will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, is more than an alpha (a non-neurotypical with superhuman abilities). Anna is also depicted as an autistic woman. Anna has severe apraxia—a more

extreme form of dyspraxia—and is unable to speak or even move without great difficulty. When the group forcibly evicts two Red Flag (a terrorist organization comprised of alphas) operatives, they almost don't notice Anna in the back room. Dr. Rosen, a neurologist and leader of the group, examines Anna, concluding that she is low-functioning autistic and perhaps cognitively disabled. The group assumes that the Red Flag operatives used Anna, an invisible presence in the house, as a cover while conducting their operations from her home without her being able to protest. Rosen tells his team that he will search for a "home" in which to place Anna.

Anna is presented as, conversely, both invisible and unsightly. Her humanity is barely acknowledged, so she goes mostly unnoticed. However, her unsightliness remains evident in the noises she makes to communicate, her awkward body postures, and her stimming.³ These unsightly behaviors are stigmatized in autism in the same manner and for the same reasons as the epileptic seizure. Smith equates the fear of the uncontrolled body to the fear of losing control:

Such dramatic and unusual movements and behaviors have long been understood in relation to their effect on viewers. In the United States, epileptics were included in many regions' 'ugly laws' because, as Charles Henderson wrote in his 1906 book on the 'dependent, defective, and delinquent classes,' '[i]n sociable intercourse the epileptic is an object of dread, and no one who has witnessed the person in a convulsion can quite escape from the haunting memory of the spectacle and entirely free his

³ Self-stimulating behavior used by autistics to relieve stress or to expend extreme emotional energy. Examples of common stimming behaviors include hand-flapping, finger twitching, rocking, or other complicated full-body movements.

mind from terror or disgust.’ In ‘The Uncanny,’ Freud asserts that an epileptic seizure recalls for its witness primitive beliefs in animism and reminds them of an uncivilized animalistic force within themselves. Both responses again see seizures [and stims] as manifesting something uncanny, that is, something that should remain hidden or repressed. (138)

The disabled body, which is socially stigmatized and sublimated to a dark place to remain unseen, is, conflictingly, also a spectacle. Invisibility, however, can also be a disability: in determining what’s “wrong” with James Whales 1993 *The Invisible Man*, a constable asserts, “‘He’s invisible, that’s what’s wrong with him!’ although his presentation of invisibility as something that is ‘the matter’ clearly understands it as a defect” (Smith 176). What is invisible is, it is often believed, hiding a disfigurement, as in H.G. Wells’ novel and its albino invisible scientist. Anna uses her invisibility to hide her true nature and her agenda from the outside world. However, Anna’s obfuscation is both protective and expected—it must be argued that Anna is forced into isolation as “cure” for her unsightliness. But Anna does not want to hide, at least not fully, from her fellow autistic, Gary.

Gary, a high-functioning autistic and alpha on Dr. Rosen’s team, takes an interest in Anna, perhaps because of their shared diagnoses. Soon, Gary discovers that Anna is not cognitively disabled; in fact, she is intellectually gifted. More than that, Anna is another autistic alpha. Gary discovers that Anna’s alpha skill enables her to understand all languages; she has even invented a language of her own through the sounds that she can make given her apraxia. It appears that Red Flag was using Anna to code and decode communiques from operatives in the field. A friendship forms between Gary and Anna

that causes Gary to assert himself as a self-sufficient adult, following Anna's model. As their friendship grows, Anna offers to help Gary decode the messages sent to and from Anna's tablet computer.

However, Gary soon learns that the assumptions of the team cause him and Dr. Rosen to underestimate Anna. Gary, discovering Anna had purposely misled him into mistranslating an important message to an operative in the field that the *Alphas'* protagonist team had caused to flee Anna's home, confronts Anna with the knowledge that she has lied to him. Gary accuses Anna of working for the operatives of Red Flag attempting to hijack a fuel tanker and incinerate a pharmaceuticals manufacturing plant. Anna responds that she is not working for the Red Flag terrorists; they work for her.

When Gary asks for Anna's help in stopping the tanker, Anna reveals that the tanker is stolen to destroy a warehouse housing a new birth defect-prevention drug called Renestrin. The problem, Anna explains, is that "lots of things are considered birth defects," including non-typical neurology resulting in Alphas. Anna tells Gary that she only wishes to force neurotypicals to embrace neurodiversity; she wants to exert her right to exist. Of course, this discourse is of double meaning being that both of the characters involved in the dialogue are autistic, and a great deal of rhetoric surrounding autism portrays it as a type of birth defect.

Thus the narrative becomes one of the genetic accidents—a construction related to the "unnatural," but elevating the blame of the procreators to attach blame to the children. Both Alphas and autistics are, in narratives of the accident, not meant to be born. The "cure" is actually genocide. That is to say, if there were a drug to prevent

autistic people from being born, it wouldn't prevent autism. Renestrin would only prevent people Alphas, not the condition of being an Alpha.

Ultimately, by sacrificing themselves, Anna's terrorist cell succeeds in bombing the pharmaceuticals plant that was manufacturing the Renestrin. Gary attempts to halt the plan, refusing to join Anna and Red Flag—despite his burgeoning desire to become more self-sufficient and independent—by sending deciphering the true, decoded information Anna had sent to her team. Anna escapes by conducting a DoS attack—an attack used against online servers whereby attackers flood the server with requests to communicate to cause the server to shut down and reboot—on Gary. Anna later, remotely, sends a signal to apologize to Gary for hurting him.

Anna's invisibility hides both her agenda and her intellect. One might read her isolation as punishment for a deformity of the soul, not unlike the suspicion often lobbed at the low-functioning autistic. Anna rejects the label of deficient as she rejects the label of burdensome to "normal" society. Anna's monstrosity is complex, but Anna is depicted as capable while terrorizing her enemies. Although recalcitrant in regard to her decision to injure others to protect the neurodiverse, Anna is unwavering in her belief that she is protecting others like herself, like Gary. She rejects the perception that she is an accident and that she is unsightly; she builds community. It is, however, disturbing that her character meets the same fate as so many of the monstrous autistics—she is killed, her neurological difference is "cured" by a bullet through the offending organ: the brain.

Common Threads

There are common elements in all of the cases examined above: narratives of feeble-mindedness, communicative difference and difficulty, trouble understanding and

expressing emotion, and invisibility mixed contrastively with unsightliness. However, one of the most interesting correspondences is that of procreation and the proliferation of monstrous people with autistic characteristics and the general desire to prevent these lives from coming into existence. Of course, there are also congruencies between the stories and the desire to pacify, contain, or kill the monstrous other.

These artistic representations of difference utilize monstrous metaphors, specifically the metaphor of the autistic-monstrous, to convey real human societal fears. The fear of the autistic-monstrous, as examined in the cases above, is the fear of those perceived as lacking in emotion, those with differences and unique abilities hidden, and those with unsightly behaviors and movements. When reflected into the mirror of recognition, the autistic monstrous fail the modified Turing test: they are not recognized as human, but are instead uncategorizable. The viewer smooths over the data that might lead to the recognition of the Other as human and relatable and observe only monstrous difference.

Yet with all of their differences, the monster has much in common with the hero. Because most monster stories are also hero myths. For Beowulf, a Danish foreigner of monstrous strength and fortitude, there is Grendel who possess equal strength and fortitude. The Alphas of Alphas counterbalance the Alphas of Red Flag with similar, sometimes exactly the same, amazing neurologically empowered abilities. Even classic monsters like King Kong and Godzilla have been famously recast as protagonists in recent retellings and continuations of their origin stories. Who is a hero and who is a monster is a matter of perspective. The Alphas of Alphas counterbalance the Alphas of

Red Flag with similar, sometimes exactly the same, amazing neurologically empowered abilities.

Conclusion

No matter the intentions of the respective authors who have enlisted these monstrous characters with autistic qualities, I posit that all of these characters are examples of autistic-monstrous. Humans are not raised in a cultural vacuum; we cannot isolate one thread of meaning from another, especially if we are using the ancient conceptions of the monster—whether or not it takes the form of the unnatural man, the zombie, the demon, or the invisible girl. Culture is in and around us from the day we are born until the day we die; it permeates our everyday lives and all of our creations. The fear of the autistic is an archetypal fear, one based in misunderstanding and misconception.

To understand the fears that originate the autistic-monstrous we must return to the conceptual metaphor and the failings thereof. In creating a bridge between one concept and another, we might create false understanding of the idea we are attempting to examine. As French theorist Michel de Certeau reminds us, any text is “[b]y its very nature available to a plural reading,” and thus “the text becomes a cultural weapon...” (171). Although Certeau has official interpretations versus plural interpretations in mind while writing the above line, populist interpretations of a text are both possible and can be oppressive in claiming the text is both innocuous and valuable, true to popular interpretations and validating of archetypal fears. In addition to implying via quotation marks that the literal meaning does not exist, Certeau verifies that interpretations of a text are not only plausible, but omnipresent. Indeed, all meanings read into a text may exist,

and certain readings may legitimize fears of marginalized peoples, like the autistic. Metaphors of the autistic-monstrous are not merely literary or cinematographic, they are projected onto real bodies with real results in our physical world.

The *Frankenstein* story is not only one of the terrors of science overtaking nature in the creation of life, but also a tale of the unnatural birth—unnatural in the sense that Sontag tells us means only something of which one disapproves (74)—and of feeble-mindedness. Unnatural birth, the birth of a person that is, for some reason, not perceived fully or wholly human, is also a common theme in the conception of autism. Millions are spent every year to prevent the birth of “unnatural” autistic children. Meanwhile, feeble-mindedness has, since its conception in the early twentieth century, been connected to the cognitively and developmentally disabled, the working class, criminality (Smith 66), and by virtue of its repugnancy to other classes that were perceived as objectionable to society, like homosexuals (Benshoff 55). Therefore, *Frankenstein*, as it is told in the film, preys upon a fear of the abnormal brain (quite literally) metaphorically applied to the non-neurotypical and the profligation of these unnatural, inferior lives.

While unnatural procreation (or “unnatural” creation) is the fear related to the procreation of the autistic in *Frankenstein*, the metaphor of invasive disease—as autism is viewed in mainstream society—as epidemic is present in many zombie narratives, *Warm Bodies* included. As with most contemporary zombie tales, the zombies in *Warm Bodies* have been made into the living dead through means of an unknown virus and an epidemic of the zombie-making disease ravages the world, possibly leaving only one city of living people on the planet. The epidemic is merely the plural of disease, and as such

the epidemic inherits and intensifies the disease metaphor and its meanings of corruption, decay, and evil. Therefore, the notion of the “epidemic” of autism is direct evidence that autism is thought of as a disease, and receives the socially constructed meaning the concept of disease has incorporated: it is ugly, repugnant, and undesirable. Furthermore, *Warm Bodies* exemplifies the fear of the autistic quality of dyspraxia, or one of many conditions—including disease—that disrupt the illusion of any individual’s control over their own bodies.

Like epilepsy, autistic dyspraxia suggest “a lack of bodily and neurological control that everyone shares but that some are able to disavow to a greater or lesser degree” (Smith 138). Of course, the dyspraxic autistic, such as the zombie R, is unable to disavow her lack of control over her own body, yet her mind may remain fluid and cognizant. These, among other common autistic features, are reflected in the zombies of *Warm Bodies*, such as R, and autistics in the real world. The decay of a zombie, who may be lacking in body parts, is congruent with emotionlessness of the autistic—that is to say, that the autistic are often viewed as incomplete because of their seeming lack of emotion, just as the zombie, or the amputee, is not considered whole because of their lack of a limb.

There is, of course, a fear arising from a combination of the invisible and the visible; while the decay of the zombie is visible, the Autism has been referred to as an invisible disability. That is to say that it is not a disability that is readily apparent to any viewer without interaction between said person and the person on the spectrum. To the normate spectator, the invisible disability is equivalent to a hidden disfigurement, a mask to hide one’s true nature, like the perceived disfigurement of the soul that is thought to

characterize the autistic-monstrous. The apparent malice hidden from the normate by the non-normate is exemplified by the early treatment of homosexuals during the Cold War era: “The idea that there could be ‘hidden homosexuals,’ that perceived sexual identity might be a mask, or that a person—child, parent, brother, friend—could suddenly ‘come out’ was profoundly upsetting” (Bronski 222). Homosexuality, once clinically considered an illness or disability, could be hidden. Moreover, social stigma directed at those who were public unveiled to be homosexuals dictated that homosexual behavior *should* be hidden. Similarly, those with invisible disabilities such as autism also obscure their behavior and even their bodies from public view. Those autistic people, like Anna Levy, that either refuse to hide or hide in plain sight are feared for their “ugliness” and for their invisibility.

Anna of *Alphas* is monstrous for two reasons that equal a contradiction: Anna both could hide and could be seen. Representative of “ugly laws⁴,” autistic people who lacked motor control, like those with apraxia, are “unsightly” to the normate viewer. Viewing the body or representative behaviors of a disabled body might provoke a physical, bodily reaction in the normate viewer and cause discomfort. The frailty of the body, the machine-like faultiness of a body operating according to a disabled neurology, or a body remediated through technology or “alien” cultural practices might all be considered restricted and in contrast to the city ordinances commonly referred to as “ugly laws.” It is of note that even bodies regulated via cultural practices foreign—bodies that are not easily read, not easily congruent to the self—to the normate could be viewed as

⁴ “Ugly laws” refer to city ordinances in the United States that materialized in the late 1800s, some remaining on the books until the 1970s, restricting the “unsightly” or “disgusting” body (often the disabled body) from public view as it might cause offense to the normate populous (Schweik 24-27).

unsightly and, therefore, illegal under the codes of the ugly laws: “People thought to assume wounds or scars or crutches just as a man, say, might assume a woman’s guise violated the principle that bodies should be guileless, self-representative, readily legible” (Schweik 164). Once again, there is an intimate association between the monster and the socially constructed body, whether or not that link is produced through physical bodily differences or cultural regulation of what a body *should* look like and *should* function in the view of a normate spectator.

It cannot, however, be overlooked that the fear of the invisible disability stems from a suspicion of hidden deformity. The terror of the invisible disability is that of the hidden predator, the wolf in sheep’s clothing. Anna of *Alphas* represents, quite literally, the monster that hides among the flock. The suspicion is that outward displays of non-normate behavior (stimming, rocking, or lack of speech or apraxia) might be outer signs of deformity of the spirit, of the soul. Of course, because of a seeming shift in the understanding of the Other, the outsider, *Alphas* does not uncomplicated the issue of Anna’s behavior coupled with Anna’s disability—that is to say, unlike the 1930s monster film, Anna as a character both affirms and deconstructs normate fears. She is both capable and disabled; she is granted the complexity of a real human being.

There is, of course, contradiction, contrast, and complexity in every portrayal that attempts to be truthful to human nature and human interaction. After all, most monster stories are also stories of the heroic... and the hero, as I will explicate in the next chapter, often shares some of the more monstrous abilities of the of the monster antagonist. Although I do believe that the characterization analyzed in this chapter are mostly presented as monstrous, attempts have been made to reclaim or complicate each of the

portrayals listed above. Frankenstein's monster has appeared as self-sacrificing and protective in films like *Monster Squad* (1987) and *Van Helsing* (2004); R and his zombie friends aide the living in destroying the bonies and even protect one another from conservative humans in both the film and book *Warm Bodies*; finally, Anna spirit appears to Gary in a second season episode of *Alphas* entitled "Gaslight" encouraging Gary to assist his neurodiverse friends. Needless to say, a shift appears to be occurring in the way the monster is viewed, especially in the science fiction genre. In complicating the ability/disability binary, the science fiction genre is flipping or queering the binary and, ultimately, leading to a way that may assist educators in unsmoothing the autistic-monstrous.

CHAPTER IV

THE AUTISTIC-HEROIC: A DECONSTRUCTION OF dis/ABILITY

In Chapter Two, I began our discussion of metaphor. Then, I moved to develop an understanding of conceptual metaphor, or metaphors that allow us to understand new concepts in relation to other concepts that are created mostly through social construction. Later, I conversed the monstrous figure as one particular conceptual metaphor utilizing monster theory. In determining how monstrous metaphors become applied to people, I examined conceptualizations of the self and others through Lacanian theory and Alan Turing's "imitation game." Finally in this second chapter, I outline the theoretical framework with which to analyze texts for the autistic-monstrous.

The third chapter is a direct examination of the autistic-monstrous in imaginative texts. The metaphors that make up the narratives lead directly back to the same fears that marginalize the autistic (among others): fears of different ways of moving, thinking, feeling, relating to the world, and, ultimately, fear that those that harbor these "abilities" will proliferate. I surveyed feeble-mindedness and "unnatural" procreation in *Frankenstein*, dyspraxia and the epidemic in *Warm Bodies*, alexithymia and indoctrination in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and I concluded by investigating invisibility and genetic aberration in *Alphas*. The astute reader will recognize that many of these monsters also have heroic qualities, perhaps even the same heroic qualities they inspire in the protagonists of their narratives.

This chapter entails an examination of the connection between the autistic-monstrous and the autistic-heroic. Put simply, society enjoys monster stories; there is no other way to explain the ancient narratives of monsters battled back by heroes—it is a

relationship inherently linked and congruent. When there are monsters, there is a hero battling these frightful, powerful creatures. Often the hero possesses monstrous qualities, sometimes in similar proportions to the monsters that they battle. Power is, of course, seductive and desirable. Jeffrey Cohen implies that the monster is the dark mirror image of ourselves, our idealized form; we desire the security from the monster, yet we envy its freedom and fluidity (16-20). Thus the same characteristics that comprise the autistic-monstrous might be recast in a more socially acceptable form, the autistic heroic. The deconstruction of the binary separating the autistic-monstrous and the autistic-heroic must be the first step toward intervening between the marginalizing narratives formed by metaphors of the autistic-monstrous.

Determination and Perceval from *Perceval, the Story of the Grail*

Chrétien de Troyes's 12th-Century epic poem, *Perceval, the Story of the Grail*, presents the young knight as an emotionally-detached, socially-awkward, and literal man whom, I believe, is a heroic example of autism in literature. In the story, Perceval is unifocal in his interests—a character trait common to Asperger's Syndrome. Perceval is obsessed with becoming a knight after meeting a group of knights in the forest as a boy (de Troyes 4-12). Perceval seems consumed with questions about specific equipment of knighthood—he asks the knights about their shields, their spears, and their chainmail shirts (7-10)—and is so busy with running monologue as to ignore the inquiries of the knights he is interrogating; he seems to have no sense of the flow of conversation, leading one of the knights to admonish him:

‘What kind of game is this?

You set me all sorts of questions

And never answer mine!
In the name of God, I expected
Answers from you, not questions:
You act as if I'm your teacher!' (de Troyes 8)

These knights, like the others Perceval encounters at Arthur's Carlisle Castle, assume his difference is on account of his Welsh heritage (9) and, thereby, do not perceive his Uncanny Otherness. However, his heritage does not seem to account for his oddity in conversation with the knights that fascinate him so much that he does not wish to change focus. One of the knights continues to describe the boy's strange manner:

"As God as my witness, his wits
Are distinctly scattered. Whatever
I ask him, point blank, he answers
Sideways, and off the mark." (8-9)

Perceval is, thusly, characterized as strangely behaved; yet, perhaps because the culture of the early middle ages allows for a greater tolerance of some differences in behaviors, the lack of perception of invisible disability, or because Perceval seems childlike and innocent, the knights make little of his unique understanding of conversation and Other him according to his Welshness rather than his autism.

Perceval also appears to be a concrete, literal thinker. He interprets his mother's advice that he might ask for a kiss or accept a ring from a maiden he rescues (18-19) as *carte blanche* to take these things, should he perform a heroic deed for a lady when he "rescues" a maiden and steals from her twenty kisses and an emerald ring (de Troyes 23). The young Perceval is unable to distinguish between what he *can* do and what he *should*

do; he violates the young woman, not out of malice, but out of misunderstanding and misreading of social cues.

As a would-be young knight, Perceval has no conception of common niceties; for instance, when he strides into Arthur's court on horseback and does not dismount (de Troyes 30-32). de Troyes tells us of Perceval, "No one watching could think him / Polite..." (32). His lack of social skills is, of course, indicative of an Aspergian disregard for social graces and pleasantries.

de Troyes soon tells us of Perceval's fatal flaw, a flaw which he must overcome to transform into the great knight he is destined to be. The entire story is predicated upon Perceval's sin, a sin he is told about along with the death of his mother whom he left despondent at his departure (200-202). Crying as he realizes his lack of empathy, specifically empathy for his mother, Perceval discovers that he has acted without empathy for others and his entire quest has been based upon his discovery and reparation of this flaw (200-205); therefore, the story serves, like the narrative of Anya's self-sacrifice, as narrative prosthesis (Mitchell and Snyder). Ultimately, Perceval proves he is capable of empathy, yet he, like many of those on the spectrum, requires a cognitive connection to activate empathy (Attwood 13).

His naiveté mistaken for innocence and his dogged determination in focus on becoming a good knight make Perceval a model for even modern heroic figures. Clark Kent, the young Iowa farm boy who would become Superman in the DC comics, is also rather simplistic in his thinking, a true alien foreigner, and often described as an "eternal boy scout." I would not hesitate to say that Perceval is an early template for the Superman persona. I also believe that the inspiration for Perceval was, most likely, based

upon a real individual, a real person with autism, except that de Troyes saw strength where others saw weakness, oddness, and perhaps even monstrosity.

Adaptability and Data from *Star Trek: The Next Generation (ST:TNG)*

Star Trek: The Next Generation is an hour-long science fiction program whose production ran from 1987 until 1994. Based on the popular '60s television show *Star Trek*, *The Next Generation* is set roughly a century after the end of the five-year mission described by Captain Kirk in the original series. In order to take the place of the alien science officer of the original series, Spock, *The Next Generation* draws upon the first android in Starfleet, a sort of intergalactic United Nations dedicated to exploration of the universe, Lt. Commander Data (Brent Spiner).

Over its seven-year run, Data explored human experience from afar. Emotionless, socially awkward, and rigid in his routines and thinking, Data is a prime example of the autistic-monstrous. Yet, despite Data's monstrous autistic qualities, he is considered a valued and even heroic addition to the *Enterprise* crew. Moreover, Data changes over time; his understanding of emotion, art, and human nature expands and enlarges over the course of his time with his human crewmates. Data proves, like any other person, including those on the spectrum, that he is adaptable. Therefore, in this section, I will explicate the heroic nature of Data in adapting to his life and those unlike himself to grow and change, aiding his friends in understanding the meanings of life and friendship.

Adaptability is generally not linked to autism. It is true that most people on the spectrum prefer rigid, repetitive routines. However, those routines adapt and change over time. Like anyone else, autistics learn and grow. Also, like anyone else, autistics can learn to use their natural characteristics to their advantage. Even characters with autistic-

like characteristics and personality facets, both real and perceived by outsiders, which would be viewed as necessarily stagnant, such as Data on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, change and adapt over time.

The android character of Data was not particularly adaptable when he was introduced on the television show *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. As an android, Data cannot lie (unless he was programmed to do so), does not speak in adjectives, and does most things—including his artistic endeavors of painting, playing music, and acting—in a mechanical, technically proficient way, but (according to his friends and critics) lacks depth and true emotional understanding. Data also understands most instructions literally. For example, while performing *The Tempest*, Data designs a stage on the holodeck with barely visible light, as he wished to be as authentic to the play's setting as possible. Picard (Sir Patrick Stewart) typically commends Data for his artistic efforts; the discomfort appears palpable on Picard's face as he attempts to offer fair critique to Data while attending interpretations of plays, music recitals, and poetry readings offered by Data and must provide feedback that is measured, fair, and none-too-harsh. To his credit, Data acknowledges his literal interpretation and adapts. However, other characters, many of whom are narcissistically attached to their own perceptions, deny Data's ability to change and accommodate different perceptions.

In the "The Schizoid Man" episode, Data's basic right to exist is questioned by a self-indulgent, hypocritical, and misogynistic dying scientist Dr. Ira Graves (William Morgan Sheppard). Dr. Graves is scanned for illness against his will when his young assistant, concerned for his wellbeing, contacts the Enterprise for medical assistance. The

medical officer sent to Graves' house confirms that Graves is, indeed, dying. There is no cure, and Graves' death is imminent.

A cyberneticist, Graves is a source of intellectual curiosity for Data—and Data is perhaps the only being in the landing party of any interest at all to Graves. After harassing the female staff, Graves is immediately drawn to Data. During a private conversation in Graves' office, Graves confesses to Data both that he knew of his impending death and is unconcerned by it as he has devised a way to transfer his consciousness into a computer. When Graves whistles the tune to “If I Only Had a Heart,” Data enquires about the song. Graves explains that it is a song about a metal man whose only wish is to become human. Data enquires if the metal man gets his wish, to which Graves responds that the Tin Man was always human, but he worried so much about his possible lack of humanity that he did not realize it. Graves then feels a pang and tells Data that, as a machine, he will never feel pain, envy, lust, or pleasure. Graves tells Data that he pities him for his lack of emotion, for being so close to human but so far away at the same time. After Data reveals that he has an “off switch,” Graves begins to ruminate on how he might switch his thinking, feeling consciousness into Data's body and fulfil Data's wish. To Graves, Data is a lesser creation incapable of “true” humanity.

Intoxicated by his own power and ability, Graves terrorizes the Enterprise crew and his young assistant. He uses Data's immense strength to go to the engineering section of the ship and incapacitate the crewmen he finds there. Intuiting what must have happened on the planet to explain Data's recent uncharacteristic behavior, Captain Picard travels to Engineering to confront Graves in Data's body:

PICARD. I know who you are and what you've done.

DATA. Of course you do.

PICARD. I came here to talk to Data.

DATA. I cannot allow that.

PICARD. I understand your desperation—the shock of learning you were dying. But you had no right to do what you have done.

DATA. I had every right, Captain. I am man; he is machine. There is no question who must live and what must die.

PICARD. What of Data?

DATA. Data? Before me, he was nothing. Just a walking tin can with circuits for intestines. Pathetic. Without heart, a man is meaningless.

(Landau, “The Schizoid Man”)

Data is to Graves an emotionless, passionless being incapable of enjoying his existence. This argument is also present in narratives against the rights of autistic people. This lack of similar emotionality supersedes a being’s right to existence and must be remediated. By being monstrous, it must be cured or eliminated. Graves has seemingly chosen to kill Data to remediate Data’s emotional difference.

In contrast, Picard argues for Data’s rights as a conscious, thinking being. Data has not only the right to live, but he has the right to exist despite his difference. Picard fails to sway Graves, but it is Graves’ injuring of his young lab assistant that convinces him that he does not belong in a body as powerful as Data’s; with his volatile emotional states and Data’s immense physical power, Graves could end up hurting someone he loves. Graves decides to transfer his consciousness from Data and into the computer as he had originally intended. Data’s way of existing in his form is, in some ways, superior to

Graves'. Data would never commit a crime of passion or hurt someone he values in a fit of rage. Data's mode of existing in his android body has also been adapted in that he seeks new knowledge and experiences.

Data's adaptability is, at first, called into question even by Captain Picard when Starfleet faces the threat of an enemy Romulan fleet threatens to cross unseen, cloaked and mostly undetectable, into Klingon space and aid a coup against the friendly Klingon government. In an episode entitled "Redemption," we learn that the alien Klingon Empire, once hostile to the Starfleet but now allies, is resisting a coup by hostile forces within its own ranks. The Federation and the mainstream Klingon government's mutual enemy, the Romulan Empire, threatens to aid the rebellion and destabilize the Klingon alliance with the Federation and the bordering sections of space occupied by the Federation and the Klingons.

Learning of the plot to smuggle supplies to the Klingon dissidents by way of cloaked Romulan ships, Picard has his crew devise a method of detecting such obscured vessels by way of energy beams sent continuously between one starship and another, creating a vast sensor net. In order to set this plan into action, however, the Captain requires several vessels above and beyond the *Enterprise*. While Picard is able to secure several ships for his purpose, a few of the ships are still undergoing last minute construction—many do not even have experienced command crews. To lead the ships, Picard temporarily assigns his own senior officers to command the starships.

Despite the lack of competent senior officers to assign to all of the ships needing experienced command crews, Data, a senior officer with twenty-six years of experience, is not assigned to command a vessel. Data speaks immediately to Captain Picard to

inquire as to why. Data surmises that he was not chosen because the Captain feels an android unfit for command of a starship. Data begins to tell the Captain that if he is still unfit, he would continue to improve his abilities so as to be seen as capable. The Captain, seemingly sensing his own unconscious prejudice against someone so cognitively and emotionally atypical (like the autistic non-neurotypical), interrupts Data to offer him command of the *Sutherland*.

Data finds his second in command, Commander Hobson, to be both skeptical of Data's abilities to command and vocal in regard to this opinion. Immediately upon Data's taking command of the ship, Hobson requests a transfer. When Data inquires as to why the Commander would wish to leave the vessel, Hobson replies that he does not think Data physically capable of command, in the same way other alien species are unsuited (in Hobson's opinion) to certain duties onboard a ship.

Of course, one could easily make the connection between Hobson's comments and modern day comments regarding women not being suited for military office; women, it is still believed by some, are physiologically incapable (disabled) in some the opinion of some. This scene is also implicit regarding neurological and cognitive difference, as Hobson is not implying that Data does not possess sufficient strength—Data is, in fact, several times stronger than an average human male—or that he Data is overly emotional; it is actually quite the opposite.

When Captain Picard orders his fleet to superficially appear to give the Romulan convoy the opportunity to avoid the detection grid, seeking to trap them when they move to take the bait, Data aboard the *Sutherland* does not comply. Data has sensed that Romulans may have used a disruption tactic to avoid detection—the trap Picard is trying

to set will never spring, as the Romulans intend to disrupt the net at the *Sutherland*, of whom they've discovered Data is captain, and pass through undetected. However, the Romulans, like many of his neurotypical fellow officers, have underestimated Data's ability to think fluidly and adapt. Data temporarily disregards Picard's order to regroup the fleet and orders his crew to reconfigure the sensor array to detect a tachyon signature he believes might have been left behind from the Romulan attempt to disrupt the detection net. To realign the sensors and have weapons at the ready for detection of the Romulan ships, the crew of the *Sutherland* need to send personnel into irradiated sections of the *Sutherland*:

HOBSON: That will flood three decks with radiation!

DATA: We will initiate radiation protocol when necessary.

HOBSON: You don't give a damn about the people whose lives you're throwing away. We're not just machines!

DATA: Mister Hobson! You will carry out my orders or I will relieve you of duty.

HOBSON: Yes, sir. (Carson, "Redemption, Part II")

Hobson's prejudices regarding Data's abilities are revealed to be underpinned by a belief that, as an "unfeeling" machine, Data is incapable of understanding the value of human life. Similar to beliefs of many regarding the autistic, Hobson believes Data cold, rigid, and ultimately monstrous. In Data's attempt to fulfill a goal, a duty, Hobson fears Data will disregard all emotional factors. This is, of course, ironic, as the ability to reason is often evaluated above the ability to feel emotion in leadership positions. However, Data's strengths appear as weaknesses to the prejudiced eye, like Hobson's.

Ultimately, Hobson is humbled when Data's suppositions prove correct, and the Sutherland detects three Romulan vessels attempting to cross the blockade while cloaked. Data was able to use seemingly unrelated knowledge and apply that knowledge and experience to adapt to a new and ever-changing situation. In other words, Data, like certain autistic people, possesses superior fluid intelligence and utilized that aptitude to adapt to a novel situation. For example, according to a 2008 Japanese study, high-functioning people on the spectrum may possess superior fluid intelligence, or, as described above, the ability to adapt knowledge from one area to respond appropriately to another (Hayashi, et al). Importantly, Data, like all people, utilizes his strengths to minimize his weak spots; he adapts, grows and changes. Congruently, autistic people can change, grow, and adapt.

Despite his cognitive and emotional differences, Data is viewed as heroic. Some individuals whom he meets in his travels regard him as monstrous: without feeling, incapable of "true" humanity, and inherently inferior despite having extreme ability in some regards. Even his friends and colleagues have proven capable of unconscious prejudice toward him. However, ultimately even his detractors must admit that the same qualities that upset and unnerve them about Data are Data's strengths. Also, despite claims of Data's lack of attention to the value of life, Data has proven himself a giving friend, often entrusted with preserving the lives of his comrades, even at the cost of his own existence. In the final installment of the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* movies, *Star Trek: Nemesis*, Data ends the film by sacrificing himself to save the crew of the *Enterprise* by leaping aboard an enemy ship and stopping it from releasing a wave of radiation that would have killed everyone aboard the *Enterprise*. This redemptive act of

selflessness is often seen in narratives of supposedly unfeeling, hyper-logical characters, such as Data, Spock (Leonard Nimoy) from the original series of *Star Trek*, and Anya (Emma Caulfield).

Self-sufficiency, Self-advocacy, and Gary Bell of *Alphas*

Alphas, the program that featured Anna Levy as an antagonist during its first season, also featured a high-functioning autistic character as a part of the ensemble of protagonists. As a deconstruction or complication of the ability/disability binary, *Alphas* problematizes the perception of hyper-ability by examining the complication of how those abilities reflect in disabilities. For example, one alpha, Kat, has the ability to maintain memory of any skill she observes (a fictionalized version of muscle memory); however, because of the resources Kat must extend to memorize skills she observes Kat has almost no long-term memory—she is even unable to remember her own surname. It appears that the autistic character, Gary Bell's (Ryan Cartwright), owes his autism as complication to his alpha abilities.

Gary Bell of *Alphas* represents a landmark, albeit a mostly overlooked occurrence, in cinematic history. Gary represents one of the very first diagnosed high-functioning autistic characters to be featured in a mainstream television series as a part of the main cast of protagonists. Gary Bell is a young, high-functioning autistic—as Gary reiterates at certain times, he rates a “32 on the CARS”⁵—man with the remarkable ability to see all electromagnetic wavelengths, decrypt their content (in most cases),

⁵ The Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS) is a diagnostic tool used to differentiate autistic children from children with other developmental disabilities utilizing behavioral criteria. Ratings range from 15 to 60 with 30 being the cutoff for a diagnosis of autism.

process the massive amount of data he receives, and trace the source of any particular EM signature.

When the series premiered in 2011, Gary's autism was clearly defined from the first episode. Ryan Cartwright's portrayal as an individual on the autistic spectrum was praised for his complex and compassion take on Gary and its honesty in eschewing common stereotypes. It is not despite Gary's disability that Gary is heroic, but often it is *because* of his autism that Gary is able to learn and grow and help his friends and coworkers.

Disability is often constructed on a binary in the subaltern position to ability. Therefore, it is usually difficult for the non-disabled to consider that an autistic man, like Gary, may have any ability at all, much less that his disabilities might, given the right circumstances, be abilities. For example, in the world of *Alphas*, Gary's autism makes him immune to induction, or the ability of some Alphas to "push" their own will onto others; also, in an episode entitled "Unusual Suspects," Gary's non-emotive facial expressions and vocal inflections (both common features of autism) make it impossible for a micro-facial-reading Alpha unable to "read" Gary's intentions in speaking while being interrogated; and finally, in the season two finale, Gary appears to be immune to the brainwave altering device that has affected both other non-autistic Alphas and has killed the non-Alpha non-autistic bystanders. In *Alphas*, Gary's disability is, in several ways, an ability. As was said of *Alpha's* when I discussing Anna Levy, the entire television show's premise is based around a complex (and entertaining) deconstruction of the ability/disability binary.

Gary begins his assertion of self-sufficiency when he meets Anna in the “Rosetta” episode of *Alphas*. Gary is immediately intrigued by Anna. According to Dr. Lee Rosen, the neurologist who serves as Gary’s boss and therapist, Gary has never met someone “like himself.” “It’s new and intoxicating,” later says Rosen of Gary meeting Anna.

Gary soon realizes that everyone else has underestimated Anna. He realizes that Anna can, in fact, communicate; her communication takes a form that is unrecognizable to others, especially others off of the autistic spectrum. Anna (as a person) thus remains invisible. Anna opens up to Gary, and he responds positively to her, as well. It is Anna who encourages Gary to assert himself:

ANNA. I need help sometimes. A woman comes to buy groceries and pay bills, but I'm in charge of my own life.

GARY. I'd like to buy my own clothes. My mom won't let me. She won't let me buy a leather jacket like the one in *Step Up 2: The Streets*.

ANNA. You don't need your mother or Dr. Rosen to take care of you. You're really smart.

GARY. Yeah, I am really smart. I don't... I don't like to do some things. Anna, you don't know me well. I don't like to take care of myself.

ANNA. I think I know you a little bit.

GARY. Yeah. (Gaviola, “Rosetta”)

Gary here begins to realize that Anna is correct; he is a capable adult who should demand a greater amount of independence and respect from his mother and his coworkers. Gary begins by making the decision to stay with Anna for himself. Later, Gary makes another decision for himself: rather than go with Anna and allow her colleagues to hurt others,

Gary deciphers how Anna has hidden the true location of the fuel tanker her men have hijacked and texts his team so that they may attempt to stop the truck from destroying the factory. Although his team is unable to stop Anna's men from achieving their goal, having Gary alert the team gave them time to stall the effort and for workers in the factory to evacuate.

Gary is anything but the simple character his developmental disabilities would stereotypically suggest. Despite the other characters' trepidation, Gary seems to understand the complexity of the conflict between the neurotypical government, his organization, and Anna's faction of Red Flag. With help from Anna, he even begins to understand and appreciate his own neurodiversity. Gary grows steadily, so much so that he knows he must protect his mother when she has a car accident due to a stroke. It is in a moment of lucidity that his mother, from her hospital bed, tells Gary that he must aid Dr. Rosen. A severely wounded Rosen has decided to stop an Alpha supremacist, Stanton Parish, from activating a device that will magnify the abilities of Alphas while killing non-Alphas in the New York City area so that he may rule over people like himself, people whom he views as superior to non-neurotypicals in every way. Gary senses that his mother is correct and tracks down Dr. Rosen, who is on a suicide mission to eliminate Stanton Parish before Parish can activate his device:

ROSEN. Gary?

GARY. What... Oh, Dr. Rosen, what are you doing here?

ROSEN. Gary... I need help.

GARY. I need to get my mom out. Bill said it's not safe. I wanna move her somewhere safe now.

ROSEN. Oh, how is she doing?

GARY. Oh, she's boring. She's awake, but she's just staring.

ROSEN. Gary, I'm sorry I haven't been here for you during all of this.

I've... I've been busy.

GARY. Yeah, you were busy... you kidnapped someone, held them prisoner.

ROSEN. No, I was... I was doing what I could to stop Stanton Parish, you know?

GARY. Yeah, to kill him.

ROSEN. No, Gary, I was trying to protect people.

GARY. No, Dr. Rosen, come on. Don't lie to me.

ROSEN. ...the same way you were trying to protect your mother.

GARY. No, you're lying to me. You wanna kill him because of Dani.

ROSEN. God's eye view, Gary. What is that? I don't know what it means.

I need your help. I imagine God's eye view... it has to be high up, and it obviously has some significance for him.

GARY. Well, his family own lots of boats, but they're not very tall. They

also own some stables. It... I don't like horses. They look confused.

There's Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon.

ROSEN. What's that?

GARY. Oh, they're architects, and Stanton Parish is on the Board of Directors. And they... oh, oh, oh! They built the Empire State building.

ROSEN. God's eye view.

DANI. Time to go. And tell him you won't see him again because you're gonna die.

ROSEN. Gary working with you means... means so much to me. I... seeing the world through your eyes has been very special.

GARY. Oh, yeah, I know. I'm amazing. (Hastings, "God's Eye")

Much like Perceval, Gary is attempting to protect his mother and his friend, in his own way. Due to his protestations, Gary's mother has realized that Gary is a capable, talented young man who is needed in the world. She finally realizes that Gary is a full human being, not merely a child. It also dawns on Rosen that he needs Gary. It is because of Anna that Gary has become aware of just how amazing he truly is. And Gary's self-confidence allows him to help his friends, his mother, and his city when they need him most.

Gary is, unfortunately, a rarity among media representations. Although protected by his friends and family, he also finds a way to earn their respect by asserting himself as a human being. It is when he discovers the neurodiverse community that Gary begins to exhibit pride. Despite the fact that others still find Gary monstrous, as demonstrated by his institutionalization at Binghamton's building seven in the second season episode entitled "Wake-Up Call," Gary still finds a way to see himself as capable, loyal, and protective. The fact that *Alphas* ran from 2011-2012 suggests that perhaps the U.S. is engaging in a more progressive understanding of neurodiversity.

Conclusion

Most monster stories have a hero, protagonists against antagonists. And most heroes are rather monstrous themselves, or, at least, the hero(es) have monstrous

qualities. Beowulf has monstrous strength and stamina to match—out match, actually—Grendel. The Doctor, of *Doctor Who*, is just as alien as his foes. Similarly, Perceval is monstrous because of his lack of understanding—that absence of understanding is what makes him foreign and, therefore, monstrous. Data is an inorganic lifeform and his differing perceptions of reality make him seem a monster. Finally, Gary needs routines and calmness to settle him and shares an understanding with others on the spectrum, regardless of their political stances, thus Gary can be seen as having monstrous qualities. While all of these characters differ, they are all seen as lacking in some area: Beowulf lacks proper breeding as a Dane, the Doctor lacks humanity as an alien, Perceval lacks empathy, Data lacks emotion, and Gary lacks adult understanding. However, all of these characters prove that they possess—usually in great amounts—what is perceived as wanting. All of these characters become heroic, not because they overcome their deficits, but because they never truly had these shortfalls to begin with.

Perceval is depicted as an innocent farm boy not unlike, as I mentioned earlier, the story of Superman. Data is self-sacrificing and selfless—congruently to Anya—which results in his ultimate sacrifice in *Star Trek: Nemesis* as he leaps to his death to stop a weapon from killing his friends and crewmates. Gary is also more than willing to put himself in harm's way to protect his friends and his mother. Even the more monstrous among the autistic-monstrous have shown, over time, a potential for heroism. Not only does Anya fight to save another life, the life she saves is one that the others, even her best friends, don't value as highly as others—perhaps this illustrates Anya's empathy, as she, too, was once a villain. The *Frankenstein* monster has been depicted as valiant and protective of others in narratives since his first appearances in Shelley's novel

and Whale's film. Finally, Anna's spirit is the one that encourages Gary to embrace himself for the amazing person that he is; Gary carries on Anna's legacy by empowering other non-neurotypicals through her message of rejection of master labels that debase non-neurotypicals and neurodiversity. Certainly, these stores of autistic-heroic characters are being examined for their nuances—this is a step forward, an opportunity to see the monstrous in a new light.

The autistic-heroic, in a sense, flips the binary. That is not to say that flipping the binary is the only or highest goal; however, flipping binaries is the being of deconstructing barriers. Before one begins demolishing old paradigms, one must examine the structure, the framework. One must locate the weak spots and the function of the concept in society. Truly, flipping a binary *is* queering the binary. I will openly and freely admit, however, that we cannot stop with merely repositioning the hierarchical structures of constructed society. To move toward a truer understanding, a critical consciousness, will require an educational intervention. I suggest that, after we have queered the concept of the autistic-monstrous, we unsmooth it. Of course, unsmoothing will have greater depth than merely undoing the autistic-monstrous and even more than the stereotypes and fears of other disabled people; I believe unsmoothing may be a path to a more liberated education and a Freireian *conscientização*.

CHAPTER V

UNSMOOTHING: A LESS MONSTROUS PEDAGOGY

In the introduction to this thesis, I presented the problem of the misapplication of the monstrous conceptual metaphor, specifically the autistic-monstrous, and the exact harm it can do. Models of dealing with the irrational fear of the autistic were presented: cure, isolate, or kill.

In the second chapter, I laid the groundwork for understanding conceptual metaphor, the metaphor of the monstrous and monster theory, as well as the conceptualization of the self and the Other. The chapter ends with an explication of my theory: that personification only occurs after one accepts or refuses the humanity of the Other based upon the similarities or differences of the Other—a modified version of the Turing test.

In the third chapter, I gave examples of how the autistic-monstrous is abstracted, projected onto real bodies, and used to stigmatize the autistic with examples from popular culture. Additionally, I discovered the connection between the autistic-monstrous and the autistic-heroic and identified a means of reversing binary formations. The chapter ends by envisioning possible intervention and destruction of the binary of the monstrous versus the heroic.

Chapter Four included a discussion of the connection between the autistic-monstrous and the autistic-heroic. The monster and the hero are intrinsically linked: there can be no conceptualization of the monster without the concept of the hero. Additionally, the hero often shares characteristics of the monster: inhuman strength, agility, or other

ability. Sometimes, the monster's ability is mitigated by a disability, or a perceived disability. For example, in the case of Beowulf, extreme strength and resolve is mitigated by foreignness.

In this chapter, I formulate an intervention with the hopes of forming critical consciousness (a.k.a. Freire's *conscientização*) in regard to the conception of the monstrous as the formation of the Other, with what is beyond Aristotelian categorization. I work against the conceptualization of the Other as monstrous by first examining the link between the monstrous and the heroic. As we have seen in Chapter Three, monster stories are often hero stories congruently. I then work to formulate intersectionality within the monstrous to locate the monstrous metaphors used to describe (and oppress) many different people using contemporary examples: examinations of the "#thedress" controversy, and Margret Quinlan and Benjamin Bates' article "Unsmoothing the Cyborg: Technology and the Body in Integrated Dance." Then, we work in a Derridean fashion to deconstruct the binary.

Although seeing the monstrous as possibly heroic is a step forward, it is not enough. The greatest gift of dismodern critical feminist/crip theory is the possibility beyond composition to decomposition—a way through what McRuer calls the "fetishized final product" (151)—until finally we unsmooth⁶ the data. Ultimately, of course, our goal is critical consciousness, a liberated and critical understanding of the world and the word; therefore, I advocate the path through composition and toward decomposition, away from structuralism and toward poststructuralism, from process pedagogy to postprocess pedagogy, until finally we arrive from smooth data to unsmooth data.

⁶ An algorithmic process by which data once filtered out (lost) is reintroduced. Therefore extremes, or outliers, are once again available for analysis.

Framework

In *Bending over Backwards*, Lennard J. Davis foresees the rise of “dismodernism” as a replacement for postmodernism (15). Furthermore, the rise of dismodernism heralds a new opportunity for ending identity politics: the end of pet identities, or the dissolution of all identities save for one’s most precious. Davis writes, “Social constructionism and performativity seemed to offer the way out of the problem cause by the worm of essentialism, but it also created severe problems in shaping notions of identity. If all identities are socially constructed or performative, is there a core identity there?” (13). He goes on to theorize that “disability may turn out to be the identity that links other identities” (13-14). If, then, identity is a notion that should be confronted in the composition classroom, as the cultural studies, feminist, post-process, queer, and critical theorists argue that it should, the classroom is no longer a postmodernist proposition but a dismodern one in need of decomposition⁷, of recognition of the chaotic, unstable nature of identity and truth. It is a classroom in need of decentering, but its needs are more than the postmodern promise can offer.

From the feminist perspective on pedagogy, we learn of the need for a decentered power structure. Feminist pedagogy is, of course, rooted in examination and interrogation of “sexist and patriarchal” practices of modern society (Jarrat 115). However, feminist perspectives on pedagogy assert that “[a]nyone interested in social justice, as so many of us who choose composition as a field are, has a stake in moving society toward more equitable arrangements on every front” (116). These equitable arrangements might, then,

⁷ De-composition, as defined by McRuer, is the conceptualization of resistance to a “fetishized final product” (151) and the idealization of one body (able-bodied, neurotypical) body writing to one (able-bodied, neurotypical audience).

be better achieved in the acknowledgement of the complexity of pedagogical environment in which learning takes place with all of its pitfalls, messes, and shifting boundaries. If Susan C. Jarratt is correct and feminist pedagogy is rooted in practices that result in “the decentering or sharing of authority, the recognition of students as sources of knowledge, and a focus on processes (of writing and teaching) over products” (115), then feminist pedagogical ideas are congruent with decomposition as imagined by McRuer and the dismodern situation as conceptualized by Davis.

Decomposition, what I will later examine as a core philosophy within unsmooth pedagogy, interrogates—among other things—the very system of compositional order. Indeed, our very composition technology, the computer, has problematized the conception of linear order. The hypertextual world of the computer and the composition that might take place in the computerized writing space complicate the very notion of clear, undeviating, hierarchical structure. The hyperlink, for example, deconstructs the idea of cohesion—it is, after all, only the illusion of containment, of order in composition. As Jay Bolter writes, “[t]o call the work [Saporta’s Composition No.1] “fragmented” is to assume that it was originally whole, that the fragments belong in one order” (149). Although Bolter was referring only to one work, I maintain that he could have been writing of any work, any composition.

To decompose, then, is to interrogate hierarchical structures. As we explore fragmentation of the work and the process, we reintroduce the “noise” that has previously been filtered out. For an example of this cohesion-illusion fetish, one need only examine a writing handbook. For example, *The Bedford Handbook* by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers includes the following: “When sentences and paragraphs flow from one to

another without discernable bumps, gaps, or shifts, they are said to be coherent” (99-100). Interestingly enough in Hacker’s and Sommers’ interpretation of cohesion, the word “discernable” appears, as if to say that “bumps, gaps, or shifts” may occur—indeed, they might be inescapable—but must be smoothed over, a sort of compositional prosthetics need be applied. It is not folly to believe in order of the composition process and its result, but the tyranny of one order—this is the primary interest interrogated by McRuer through the discussion of decomposition.

In *Crip Theory*, Robert McRuer calls for a composition pedagogy he calls “decomposition” (154). He argues that the composition classroom has long been dominated by a vision that imagines only one flexible, able-bodied, neurotypical body composing to a flexible, able-bodied, neurotypical audience. For McRuer, the writing process is a messy, unfinished, postmodern practice resistant to the modernist, fetishized complete productions of the ideal writing process as imagined by the modern corporate university. McRuer writes that

the perpetual panic over what is supposedly not happening in composition classrooms and what supposedly needs to be happening there guarantees that our identities are indeed compulsory, even if—or precisely because—we are not getting those identities exactly right... Decomposition and disorder always haunt the composition classroom intent on the production of order and efficiency. (154)

Therefore, a de-centering of perspectives would serve composition students well in deconstructing unnecessary hierarchies and coming to a Freireian liberation.

In conversation with Ira Shor, Paulo Freire advocates encouraging students to discuss their understanding of their world. Of course, Freire is quoted as referring to this understanding as “reality” (Shor and Freire 106). However, this “reality” could be understood as contingent upon the individual’s understanding of the foundational “truths”—as Kenneth Burke might denote them—upon which they conceive their own personal visions of reality to be based. Freire states as his part of the dialog, “First of all, I am convinced that epistemologically it is possible, by listening to students speak about their understanding of their world, to go with them towards the direction of critical, scientific understanding of their world” (106). By acknowledging that the students do have a functional understanding of the messages they have received, it is possible to then move them into a more critical or liberated understanding of the construction of their reality. Furthermore, students will begin to understand the fragmented reality and faux-order that has been insisted upon the practice of their language and thus the construction of their world.

The ignored fragmentation of all that mankind writes is the primary concern of theorist Michel de Certeau in his examination of the practice of everyday life as evidenced in the chapter “The Scriptural Economy.” For de Certeau, the possibilities of the body, the topographies of society, are all dictated by the creation of the self as whole. Writing, for de Certeau, is disconnected from language; specifically, language is the field while writing is the system (133). The blank page is, then, “a place where the ambiguities of the world have been exercised... It is made available for a partial but regulatable operation” (de Certeau 134). Once again, de Certeau writes of the fragmentary nature of discourse ignored in favor of a systematic and oppressive order:

Linguistic fragments or materials are treated (factory-processed, one might say) in this space [the blank page] according to methods that can be made explicit and in such a way as to produce and order... Combining the power of accumulating the past and that of making the alterity of the universe conform to its models, it [the order created by the system of writing] is capitalist and conquering. (de Certeau 134-135)

The “capitalist and conquering” aspects of the order imposed by the system of writing are most disconcerting as opposed to the goals of critical, feminist, queer, and crip pedagogy in that education must be a liberating process. Additionally, worrying are the aspects of the scriptural system becoming “self-moving and technocratic” and transforming “the subjects that controlled it into operators of the writing machine that orders and uses them” (de Certeau 136).

However valid de Certeau’s fear of systems of control, he misplaces his fear to the metaphor of the machine monster, specifically the cyborg when he references “cybernetic society” (136). In truth, de Certeau’s fear stems from a false cohesion, a partial made whole via technological prosthesis.

When dealing with conceptualizations of disability in the classroom as opposition to a false sense of unification, of insistent and incessant order, the cyborg metaphor is highly applicable. The body itself has been written; the system (the technology of writing) serves here as a type of conceptual prosthesis to create a myth (model) of body- and self-wholeness. Charlotte Ross writes that “any possible ‘wholeness’ of the body or self is necessarily illusory, precarious and troubled” (3), adding that “when we talk about or represent the body, we evoke something that is both physical and imaginary, whose

significance, boundaries and relation to the ‘self’ are contested. This means that bodily ‘wholeness’ cannot be entirely material, but always involves an immaterial supplement, an absent presence, which both completes and leaves open the body-as-conception” (5). What Ross refers to as the “immaterial supplement,” I refer to as conceptual prosthesis. Whatever term we use to refer to this concept, the referent is the same: a system by which the incomplete is composed as complete.

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson writes of the body inscribed and the system of writing to create an oppressive, yet minority position of normality whereby she coins the term *normate*: “The term *normate* usefully designates the social figure through which people can represent themselves as definitive human beings” (8). For my purposes, the most important term in Garland-Thomson’s definition is “definitive” and its synonym—“complete.” Moreover, we must consider the normative position to harness the “conceptual strategy that will allow us to press our analysis beyond the simple dichotomies of male/female, white/black, straight/gay, or able-bodied/disabled so that we can examine the subtle interrelations among social identities that are anchored to physical differences” (Garland Thomson 8). It is important to remember that physical differences may also be neurological differences. Therefore, where the *normate* model smooths over the differences to analyze an illusory “complete” and “definitive” world, the critical strategy of accepting the fragmentary and multivariate nature of the body, the self, and of reality requires unsmoothing.

Unsmoothing the Way

In data analysis and image processing, to smooth data is locate important patterns and eliminate background “noise.” To unsmooth data, which is also an important

statistical function, is to bring this “noise” back against the process of normalization. Therefore, to “unsmooth” the data in composition may be seen as complicating or problematizing. Unsmooth data is sometimes necessary when considering extremes, or situations requiring an examination of unusual highs and lows. In statistical parlance, these extreme highs and lows are termed outliers. In climate change data analysis, for example, an unnatural (confusing) smoothing of the data might occur; however, climate change scientists are most interested in unusual highs and lows in temperature and their effects on the environment. Thus scientists need to unsmooth the data in order to truly understand and analyze the outliers and the patterns of the “noise.”

An interesting example of smoothing/unsmoothing can be found in the Internet controversy known as “#thedress.” The dress in the hashtag refers to a photograph of a bicolored garment, colored with vertical stripes of color. The photo of the dress was posted on Twitter, and Twitter users were asked to identify the colors of the dress. One group of observers believed the dress to be blue with gold stripes, and others held that the same dress in the same photograph depicted a garment that was white with gold stripes. Normally, during image processing, the visual data would be smoothed and the dress would be depicted as either blue with black stripes or white with gold stripes. However, in the case of *this* picture of *this* dress, smoothing the data could result in either possibility, which is why there is such disagreement over the color of the dress in this picture. Color, of course, is merely light wave data as processed by the brain. In processing certain colors, the brain may smooth data to isolate individual colors. However, in the case of “the dress,” it becomes a matter of how the brain chooses to smooth the data. For all intents and purposes, the dress is both blue and black *and* white

and gold depending upon the viewer and how they smooth the color data. That is to say the human brain, like computer algorithms, may smooth data and miss the complexity (multivariate possibility) of the complete (or incomplete) picture.

In an article by Margret Quinlan and Benjamin Bates entitled “Unsmoothing the Cyborg: Technology and the Body in Integrated Dance,” the perception of wholeness versus fragmentation connects again with disability. While exploring Dancing Wheels, a dance company composed of both disabled and non-disabled dancers, Quinlan and Bates interview an audience member they have named Bob. Bob states his discomfort with the disabled dancers leaving their wheelchairs: ““It makes me really uncomfortable when the wheelchair people are out of their wheelchairs and it says something more about me than the dance company”” (n.p.). However, Dancing Wheels also employs non-disabled dancers, as well, and these dancers are sometimes choreographed using wheelchairs. Bob expresses no similar discomfort when those who appear non-disabled remove themselves from the wheelchairs.

Of course, both disabled and non-disabled dancers may separate themselves from the wheelchair, for the disabled body—the seemingly, obviously fragmented body—to remove itself from the chair disrupts the illusion of unity. Quinlan and Bates explain,

By emphasizing that the wheelchair is a machine separate from the human body, Bob and Dezare [another audience member] each create an additional intensity on the machine component of the cyborg. When each considered the wheelchair dancer, here intensified by the machine, the reliance on the machine for the wheelchair dancer becomes something that disqualifies the person from being a dancer. (n.p.).

Quinland and Bates conclude that it is not entirely correct to say that the disabled cyborg is always viewed as inferior, but it is more accurate to say that “the inferior form of cyborg emerges when there is an improper intensification of the cyborg elements of a disabled body” (n.p.). That is to say that when one component in the relationship between human (emotional/intellectual), animal (physical/biological), and machine (technological) is overemphasized, the cyborg becomes visible to the viewer.

In actuality, in cyborg theory, everyone is a cyborg—we all rely upon the components of the human, the animal, and the machine—but it is when we overemphasize the relation of one of the components (human, animal, or machine) that the inferior cyborg is constructed. In other words, what once was smooth becomes unsmooth. As Quinland and Bates observe, the audience of *Dancing Wheels* is unable to smooth the data as a unified whole:

At DW, a unified cyborg is what is presented and what is engaged first by the audience. However, when we push back the disunity, the parts are not fully unified. At DW, the cyborg whole—the wheelchair dancer—is not a smooth, unstriated whole. Rather, we see zones of intensity in which, at different times, the wheelchair dancer begins to break into its components, times when it is becoming-machine, becoming-human, or becoming-animal. When there is a seamless integration of machine, human, and animal, we have a blending of fully functional machine, human, and animal. When there is an over-intensification on any one part of the assemblage begins to break down. (Quinland and Bates n.p.)

Thus the myth of the unified whole is broken. The demonstration of Dancing Wheels is one that illustrates the cyborg nature of humanity.

It is not that any of us are whole, complete; the self and the body are both configured from components, and we are all cyborgs in that we, as humans, utilize technology to extend the capabilities of the body. The automobile, for example, can vastly extend the body's natural mobility. Here, Quinland and Bates emphasize that unsmoothing the data must be done systematically and with certainty of purpose lest the person processing the data focus improperly on one component.

The Process of Unsmoothing

1. Locate and identify (place within context) the cultural moment, artifact, or person (cyborg) to which value or stigma has been placed
2. Deconstruct, decompose, de-familiarize and complicate the matrix of history, time, place, and unity within the moment, artifact, or person is said to exist
3. Unsmooth the data, re-add complication and problematize

“If I Only Had a Heart”

As an example of a classroom activity to demonstrate unsmoothing principles, an instructor would have students read Quinland and Bates' article. Then, the students would view scenes from the 1939 film, *The Wizard of Oz*. In particular, students would be asked to pay close attention to the Tin Man's introduction scene where the Tin Man sings the song “If I Only Had a Heart”:

When a man's an empty kettle

He should be on his mettle

And yet I'm torn apart

Just because I'm presumin'
That I could be kinda human
If I only had a heart

I'd be tender, I'd be gentle
And awful sentimental
Regarding love and art
I'd be friends with the sparrows
And the boy that shoots the arrows
If I only had a heart

Picture me, a balcony
Above a voice sings low

I hear a beat, how sweet!

Just to register emotion, jealousy, devotion
And really feel the part
I could stay young and chipper
And I'd lock it with a zipper
If I only had a heart (E.Y. Harburg)

Students would then, in a frame of mind focused on what the Tin Man is supposedly lacking, begin to unsmooth the data. Questions to the students would include: What is it

that the Tin Man is supposedly missing? Does the Tin Man truly display outward signs that he is missing a heart? He cries and rusts, requiring oil, is that not a display of emotion? Indeed, is the Tin Man not the *most* emotional character in all of the film?

Armed with a new, if developing, understanding of how to interrupt the smoothing process of the data, students would then be asked to locate their own artifact (novel, film, commercial, video game) in which a character(s) is perceived as missing something vital to make said character fully human. The students will then be asked to begin unsmoothing—this might start with attempting to view the character in a new light. For example, can (or has) the character ever been depicted as heroic? Then, the student would be asked to go further, dig deeper. Can the concept of the monster exemplified in their artifact be broken, can it be unsmoothed?

Conclusion

The mind, like any data-processing machine, has a tendency to search for trends rather than see the world as a collection of data that, sometimes, might not fit a convenient pattern. The dress of the #thedress controversy is a prime example of how we might focus on one pattern and ignore all others. In truth, #thedress *is* both gold and white and black and blue. Seeing the garment with only one perception requires smoothing over the data that, in fact, all of the colors seen by everyone are present in the photograph.

Along those lines, the dancers of Dancing Wheels are all capable of removing themselves from their prostheses at any time; however, only the disabled dancers are not seen as whole or complete without their wheelchairs. The audience has smoothed over the data that, indeed, we are all cyborgs, fragmentary creatures that require remediation

through perception, law, and technology. If we unsmooth our perceptions of the dancers, regardless of their abilities, we might see the interaction of body, of mind, and of technology for what it really is. We might discover that we are all cyborgs, and we always were.

When we unsmooth the Tin Man, we glimpse inside what it is like to be autistic. Of course, the Tin Man has a heart and emotion, but he is perceived as monstrous. In fact, it is the very characteristic of perceived emotionlessness that often serves to vilify the autistic. Should we allow students to unsmooth their perceptual data in regard to others, we offer them a critical consciousness, an outlook on the world not half-seen or only understood through one lens. Through unsmooth pedagogy, we offer the student an opportunity to critically engage their consciousness, or, for some, to develop a critical consciousness.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The stories we tell are important. Whether we tell personal narratives or write zombie screenplays, we are constantly creating, recreating, and reifying cultural ideas, including ideas of the normate body—including the brain—that regulate behavior. We tell these stories, these regulating narratives with metaphors, and the idea of the metaphor has come a long way since it was first described and defined by Aristotle, especially in the form of the conceptual metaphor. Conceptual metaphors represent real fears, and those fears (no matter how unfounded) are attached to real bodies. We cannot think that the popular reception and recreation of these tropes comes without consequence to the real world and the more vulnerable people within it.

The autistic-monstrous is exemplified within the constructs of legendary classic horror figures such as the *Frankenstein* monster, the zombies (such as those in *Warm Bodies*), and demons (such as Anya in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*), and even the more modern example of the terrors such as Anna Levy in *Alphas*. These fictions have not been created without real world inspiration or without palpable fear of the Other. Whether the perceived other has a cognitive disability like Frankenstein's monster, dyspraxia like R in *Warm Bodies*, alexithymia like Anya of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, or apraxia like Anna Levy of *Alphas*, the fear of loss of control and neurological difference is clearly apparent in fictitious accounts of autistic-like characters. It is no large leap of logic to assume that these connections are being made (sometimes subconsciously, sometimes consciously) to non-fictitious autistic people.

Although autistic people have been maligned because of the autistic-monstrous, counter-narratives have recently become both possible and popular. These counter-narratives have given rise to the autistic-heroic. Through the autistic-heroic, resistance to the autistic-monstrous begins. It must be remembered that even though stories like that of Perceval, Data of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, and Gary Bell of *Alphas* attempt to reclaim autistic characteristics as positive, even in their own storylines, all three of these characters are still treated as monstrous: Perceval assaults a young woman because of a mistaken idea of the chivalric code; Data must constantly fight to prove his right to his autonomy (ironically, seeing as how Data is an automaton) and capability to consider others; and Gary must prove the right to his own independence and usefulness to society. Thus, although I do believe that the autistic-heroic is a good counter to the autistic-monstrous, it is not a complete reversal; it does not fully unsmooth the data.

To unsmooth the data, I have suggested we consciously deconstruct and decompose the illusion of wholeness that the normate body relies upon. This must be done systematically and with care so as to maximize the benefit from all of the data, not merely the trends. Extremes are important, after all. It is unsmooth data, for example, that has allowed us to conceptualize the global warming trend for what it actually is: global climate change capable of causing great extremes in temperatures, weather patterns, flooding, and draught. There are many extremes in human behavior, many possibilities. It is only when we begin to normalize falsely (in the statistical sense) this data that we begin applying the stigma that results in the monstrous, including the autistic-monstrous. I assert that, by practicing an unsmooth pedagogy, we may allow our students to interrupt

the vicious cycle of othering that pits *us* against *them*. To practice unsmoothing in a systematic, logical manner, the student must

1. Locate and identify (place within context) the cultural moment, artifact, or person (cyborg) to which value or stigma has been placed
2. Deconstruct, decompose, de-familiarize and complicate the matrix of history, time, place, and unity within the moment, artifact, or person is said to exist
3. Unsmooth the data, re-add complication and problematize

In the future, it would be fruitful research to examine how composition students fare when they put these steps into practice.

Further research also must be conducted to unravel the even more greatly complex systems of interrelated oppressions, the intersectionality, between class, race, and gender when in conjunction with the autistic. For example, women on the spectrum still experience the prejudices aimed at women, combined with stereotypes and tropes of the autistic. Unfortunately, women are thus far more likely than men to be envisioned through metaphors of emotional coldness: the ice queen, the refrigerator mother, the scorn woman that has turned her back to love. Anya serves as an extreme example of the latter. More research is necessary to unveil the exact nature and results of these specific autistic-monstrous metaphors.

Moreover, the trope of the robotic, computerized autistic-monstrous is fruitful for more research. As demonstrated by the student in the class in which I am an instructional assistant, conceptual metaphors of the robotic autistic-monstrous are especially prevalent in application to modern autistic individuals. However, one must ask if we fully understand the robot. Currently, the only true contemporary examples of artificial

intelligences are to be found only in science-fiction. Hopefully, positive representations of autism will, in the future, be rooted in fact rather than merely in science fiction.

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